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R. D. B.'s Procession



The Author.

Photo: *Howard Coster.*



RALPH D. BLUMENFELD

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Order of the Procession

	PAGE
1. LLOYD GEORGE	9
2. MRS. PANKHURST	13
3. GLADSTONE	15
4. LORD FISHER	19
5. LORD CARSON	25
6. LADY LONDONDERRY	29
7. LORD ROBERTS	31
8. CECIL RHODES	37
9. BUFFALO BILL	43
10. "TIM" HEALY	49
11. LORD KITCHENER	55
12. LORD CHARLES BERESFORD	63
13. P. T. BARNUM	69
14. SARAH BERNHARDT	75
15. LORD BALFOUR	81
16. PAUL KRUGER	87
17. LOTTIE COLLINS	91
18. A. BONAR LAW	97
19. PRESIDENTS I HAVE KNOWN	103
20. SOME HISTORY-MAKERS	111
21. LAWRENCE OF ARABIA	115
22. PRIME MINISTERS	119
23. KINGS OF THE RING	125
24. LORD TENNYSON	131
25. ELLEN TERRY	135

Procession

	PAGE
26. THE BACCARAT CASE	139
27. GENERAL BOULANGER	143
28. " F. E."	149
29. KING KALAKAUA	157
30. JAMES GORDON BENNETT	161
31. PORFIRIO DIAZ	167
32. R. L. S.	173
33. PATTI	177
34. LORD GREY	181
35. A. CONAN DOYLE	185
36. WHISTLER AND SARGENT	193
37. CLEMENCEAU	199
38. LORD NORTHCLIFFE	205
39. THOMAS HARDY	211
40. SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN	215
41. TARIFF REFORMERS	219
42. CRIPPEN	227
43. " JIMMY " WHITE	233
44. THOMAS EDISON	237
45. BISMARCK	243
46. MARK TWAIN	247
47. LI HUNG CHANG	251
48. PAVLOVA	257
49. ANDREW CARNEGIE	261
50. ROBERT HORNE	267
51. " JIX "	271
52. H. G. WELLS	277
53. MARIE CORELLI	283
54. SIR HIRAM MAXIM	289
55. A BOX OF OLD LETTERS	295



List of Illustrations

The Author	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing page</i>
R.D.B. as an Amateur Painter	44
R.D.B. at a City Luncheon with Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lady Greenaway . .	76
When Coolidge Smiled	108
The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, Master, R.D.B., Deputy Master	140
Spirit Photographs: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and R.D.B.	188
Miss Amelia Earhart being toasted by R.D.B. at the Luncheon in Honour of her Arrival after her famous solo Flight from New York, 1933	252
G.B.S. and R.D.B. at a Court Dinner	296



Procession

THIS is a series of brief outline sketches of people with whom I have come in contact in the course of a long journalistic career. I do not believe that there is a calling other than that of journalism which presents so much opportunity for observation of personalities. The journalist has a front seat in the stalls of the Human Theatre. He sees the vanities, the strivings, the sacrifices, the kindliness and the selfishness, the triumphs and the failures as they pass before him on that stage, and experience enables him to distinguish between the good and the bad, the great and the small.

Every man and woman in the world is endowed with some quality which, given the opportunity, would raise him or her above the level of mediocrity. Unfortunately, for the sake of completion, opportunity has to be coupled with something akin to character, energy, initiative and brains. We all have our opportunities. Alas! the other concomitants fail to parade at the proper time and so the vast majority of us have to stand at attention while the chosen ones march past.

In casting my memory's eye over the inordinately long list of names of men and women whom I have known in the past half-century, I am struck by the fact that the quality of greatness has so many shades. A man may be great in many directions. I have, however, never met one who has been great in all directions. I am sure that the Admirable

Procession

Crichton had flaws in his armour. I used to think that Cecil Rhodes, whom I knew well, was the greatest man I had ever met, yet he used to give demonstrations of weakness in outbursts of temper at nothing in particular and in judgments that were not sound. I thought Bismarck was a great man, but he had many human weaknesses, some of them attractive but not of such a nature as to commend him for the great prize; as, for instance, the Ems telegram which preceded the Franco-Prussian War. No one will deny that Lloyd George is, and was, a great man. Indeed, I am sure that history will put him down as one of the three or four great world leaders during the World War; a man far transcending in the qualities of greatness the majority of his contemporaries. But I am sure that Lloyd George has faults which would not justify me in putting him down as the greatest man I have ever met.

I am really and regretfully beginning to think that a man or woman must have been dead a long time before the world actually bestows the wreath of permanent Fame.



ONE

The Man Unafraid

I REMEMBER a gesture of Lloyd George's which will always remain with me as one of the surest signs of greatness; a gesture which epitomises the man and proves once again that in times of crisis the Man comes forward to play his part. This was Lloyd George, the Man Unafraid. It was on the morning of March 22, 1918, after the great horde of German groups of armies had hurled themselves on Hubert Gough's fragile front on the Somme. I had been at the Front in France the day before when it looked as though the British line might have to give way, with its accompanying danger of splitting the British and French Armies, threatening Paris and perhaps ending the War.

I had spent part of a day with the Third Army which was on the left of Hubert Gough's Fifth Army, and my old friend Sir Julian Byng, now Lord Byng of Vimy, had all his preparations made to meet a heavy attack on his own front. I was going over to see the Fifth headquarters at Villers Brettoneaux where Gough with his hopelessly outnumbered force was destined at any moment to be attacked by treble or quadruple the number of troops that he could put into the line. My second son was a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment which was holding a literally thin "red" line. They had about as much chance of successful defence as a nut under a hammer. It was not a cheerful

Procession

prospect and in my own personal way I was filled with apprehension.

Gough was not deluding himself any more than Byng. He was expecting the onrush at any moment. He knew that his opponents were preparing to destroy his comparatively weak force, and like a good soldier he accepted his fate with a shrug of his shoulders. It was a desperate moment and it was a tragic position in which a loyal commander found himself. He could not possibly win. He was destined for sacrifice. Well, he was sacrificed. His army was destroyed, but in its destruction it tore the entrails from the German giant. What I never could understand is why was Sir Hubert Gough made the whipping boy? Why was he discarded instead of being rewarded? The Fifth Army was not disgraced. Its heroic defence will never be forgotten, even though its commander was thrown overboard, presumably to satisfy some sort of unexpressed public desire for a scapegoat.

I got back to London late at night. In the morning I proceeded on my usual walk through St. James's Park to Whitehall. At the back door of 10 Downing Street, opening on to the Horse Guards Parade, I encountered Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, on the point of going for a walk. With him was "Reggie" Brade, the permanent head of the War Office. We stopped and talked about the crisis. They knew I had just come from Byng's and Gough's headquarters, and questioned me.

"It is pretty bad, Prime Minister," I said. "The Germans may break through and capture Amiens, which means Abbeville and the road to the sea. That will mean cutting in two the French and British Armies. It may drive Haig

The Man Unafraid

to the sea or it may send him and his army to Germany as prisoners!"

It was indeed no exaggeration. I looked at the Prime Minister thus faced with this dire problem, and asked:

"If that happens, Prime Minister, what then?"

Quickly L. G. answered, and here he showed why Britain could not lose.

"If Haig is captured? Yes. Well, we will just get us another army!"

Then with a jerk of his head he walked on.

That is what I call the Man Unafraid.

As I have said, greatness is a quality that cannot be measured in contemporaneous terms. Many people whom we now look upon as in the forefront will hardly be memories a hundred years hence. Opportunity again. After all, time is the only judge. Even then the quality of greatness will be in dispute. As for instance, Cæsar, who was uneven in his methods; Napoleon, who was vain and easily gulled; Nelson, who was a heaven-sent sailor but rather wishy-washy in other matters; George Washington, who had human weaknesses which are not recorded in the history books.

So we must dismiss the idea of producing a gallery of gods without fault and devote ourselves to one composed of real flesh-and-blood people. The journalist should see them as they are and not as they ought to be.



TWO

The Tiger Woman

SOMEHOW or other in spite of journalistic efforts the world paints its own pictures of personalities, putting either a halo over them or surrounding them with an atmosphere which wholly distorts the subject. As for instance—*place aux dames!*—the late Mrs. Pankhurst, the Tiger Woman who did so much to give women what they do not want, the vote.

The name of Pankhurst was for years synonymous with riot, virago violence, hair-tearing, bomb-throwing, hunger-striking. The first time I met this astounding creature was in 1911 when she was arrested in the midst of a noisy window-breaking campaign. I saw her on the morning on which she was sentenced to nine months; talked to her in her cell; a tired, half-smiling, gentle-voiced little devil of a woman. She looked and was desperately ill, yet there was fire in her eyes and the will to go on through all the misery that prison life had in store for her. I saw her again shortly before the War when, in order to gain what she called the Charter of Freedom for Women, she had added arson and destruction to her methods, including a fire at Lloyd George's house.

The memory of this struggling, snarling, shrieking tigress is unforgettable. I recall the strange feeling of revulsion which caused us all to wonder how this little termagant

Procession

was so fervently worshipped by thousands of women who followed her example. This strange, fanatical, shrill creature, torn and tousled, looking a million years old, had a hold over her people that was simply inexplicable.

More followed. More prisons; more hunger-striking; more snatches from what in any normally constituted woman would have been death from exposure and overstrain—and then the War.

The virago became an angel! I shall never forget the gentle, exquisitely dressed, charming little lady who came to see me in Shoe Lane to discuss national service questions. Was this the hell-shrieking Emmeline Pankhurst whom I had so often seen rushing pell-mell into the solid wall of blue-coated police?

I remember saying: "But Mrs. Pankhurst, you will forgive me if I express surprise at your metamorphosis. You used to be so violent in public."

"Ah, well," she answered, with a smile which betrayed somehow the secret of her success, "ah, well, you see I never was different inside. We would never have got women's votes if I had kept on long suède gloves. Someone had to do it. But inside I was never different. I always felt so sorry for them whenever I had to fight those dear policemen!"

That was a great lady!



THREE

The Grand Old Man

It was something of a privilege for me to feel that I could come and go at No. 10 Downing Street when Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister. The reason was that I was then the London correspondent of the *New York Herald*, the champion of Irish Home Rule as designed by the Grand Old Man. His principal support lay in the important Irish Section in America, and he could reach them quickly through my paper. So I made the most of it and "popped in" on the Prime Minister and his secretariat at every possible time.

Mr. Gladstone was an autocrat among his immediate followers, and they were correspondingly in awe of him. I do not think I ever saw so many "yes" men under one roof, but as the Chief was always free in the bestowal of honours, these future knights, baronets, peers and privy councillors found it profitable to put up with his whims.

He was a grim-looking, eagle-eyed, sonorous old gentleman. His very appearance, his hair, his great nose, the hirsute adornment of his neck, the great collar, the long broadcloth coat, all lent solemnity and form to his presence. He never joked. Life to Mr. Gladstone was a serious affair of responsibilities and time was worth something. So one did not resort to pleasantries or flippancies or inanities in the presence of the great statesman.

Procession

I was very young—far too young for my important post—and I had not as much reverence for age and experience as I have now. Nor, I confess, had I much sympathy with the G.O.M.'s politics. I was just a reporter making the most of my opportunities.

One morning in Downing Street I was regaling a couple of secretaries with the recital of a blizzard which I had experienced some years before in America; of how the night staff of the *Herald* had been unable to leave the office owing to the great fall of snow which had blocked New York street traffic, and how the day staff which was to produce the *Telegram*, the evening edition, had failed to arrive; how we printed a paper, unsaleable, for record only; how we had filled it with spring poetry about lilacs and daisies and tulips, while outside people were dying in the snow.

I looked up and saw Mr. Gladstone standing at the door. He beckoned to me to come into his room.

"Sit down," said the aged Prime Minister. "I want to tell you something. It will do you good. You will forgive me if I tell you that I have been listening to your yarn. You ought to be better occupied than to waste time in telling exaggerated stories. I can't believe it possible that people were dying in the snow outside. All they had to do was to open the first door and walk in for shelter. . . . The Queen told me the other day how much she deplored public as well as private exaggeration."

I replied that I had not stretched my facts; that they were true, and then, being young and fearless, I added, "And are certainly better substantiated than, for instance, all the terrible stories of Bulgarian atrocities which Disraeli called 'coffee-house babble.'"

The Grand Old Man

That was a deadly hit. The old man glared. You will remember that his Bulgarian atrocity campaign, which gained for Gladstone the love of all oppressed peoples, had been conducted with considerable vigour in the form of invective and colour.

Shortly after this Mr. Gladstone went finally out of office. I only saw him once after that, and for a brief minute. He whispered to me: "The stories of Bulgarian atrocities were never exaggerated."



FOUR

"Jackie" Fisher

Now, here is "Jackie" Fisher, otherwise Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, First Sea Lord, who has been termed "incomparably the greatest of Edwardians." He was an impetuous, domineering, querulous, generous, highly ingenious and amazingly vivid tyrant who quarrelled in epigrams and argued with picturesque invective; who might have diverted the course of the War, even curtailed it by months if his impetuosity had not impelled him to haul down his flag at the Admiralty in 1915, after his violent quarrels with Winston Churchill and his refusal to serve under Mr. Balfour as First Lord. He never came back.

Fisher foresaw the War. He told me once—I think it was about 1908, at Portsmouth—that the Germans would be ready for the conflict when the widening of the Kiel Canal was completed and that they would not hesitate to begin. He picked Jellicoe for command many years before 1914. He had split the Navy in two by his politics. You were either a Fisherite or a Beresfordite; and always the Fisherites won.

I used to see the old sailor in his official house in the Admiralty Arch where, at lunch or dinner, he carried on a solo conversation. His command of language was entrancing; his grasp of world politics profound; his hatreds terrifying; his loyalties fascinating; and his love

Procession

of his job beyond question wholesome and whole-souled. I can give you no more graphic picture of this ruler of the greatest fleet ever known, in the act of expressing himself without restraint or evasion, than by quoting his remarks made to me after lunch at the Admiralty on December 11, 1914, shortly after Sturdee had won his picturesque battle-cruiser victory over von Spee at the Falklands. I made notes of this talk within five minutes of my leaving the First Lord's residence, and I have here brought them to light for the first time:—

Lord Fisher's "Obiter Dicta"

With reference to the German commerce-destroyers and the inefficient efforts of the British Admiralty to capture them:

"A tortoise cannot catch a hare. A thousand tortoises cannot catch a hare. There were eleven tortoises after the *Emden*. The only way to catch a hare is with a greyhound. The greyhound can kill the hare. No greyhound has ever been killed by a hare. The greyhound is larger, longer and much faster than the hare. So we sent greyhounds to catch the hares. . . . Admiral Sturdee got to the Falklands ten minutes in front of von Spee. That was not luck. It was because we had covered the ocean with cheap colliers carrying cheap wireless plants. Each of them was like the fly to the spider, notifying the spider what it was doing. If von Spee came along and smashed up one of the flies it made no difference because the next one would take it up. So we knew exactly at what hour the Germans would arrive at the Falklands because we had previously put the

“ Jackie ” Fisher

Canopus there for him as bait. If we had been twenty minutes late the *Canopus* would have been gobbled up, and so we knew exactly at what hour we were to arrive. It was merely following Nelson's maxim: 'Get there first.'

"I scrap admirals not because I love to do it, but because they do not hit the target. Jellicoe has always hit the target, and that is the reason why I forced him into his present position. I looked up the records of ships which hit the target, and I found a fellow named Nicholson, unknown, who was a commodore and had two ships, and so I said: 'Send this man to Zeebrugge to bash up the Germans.' Everybody at the Admiralty said: 'But these ships are rotten.' 'Yes,' I said, 'but this man hits the target. *And they hit the target.*' They smashed up Zeebrugge, and I told Kitchener that if he had been able to put 10,000 men there, the Germans would have been forced over the Rhine.

"I have just had a letter from Kitchener telling me that he wished the Russians would not always complain of having so many Germans in front of them.

"It never does to make explanations. It is of no use to make explanations about the *Audacious*. My reason for this will be perfectly clear in a few weeks when you see the old *Audacious* again at sea, and the Germans will wonder how they were fooled. (He had improvised an imitation *Audacious* out of an old White Star liner in order to mislead the enemy.)

"I don't think the German Fleet will come out for a deliberate action. What will probably happen is, that von Tirpitz will never be consulted as to his dispositions. The German General Staff on land will consider it time to make

Procession

a diversion, just as Napoleon did when he was on the heights of Boulogne before the battle of Austerlitz. He sent Villeneuve out to fight Trafalgar. He did not know that Trafalgar was to be fought. He didn't care. Nor did he care if Villeneuve went to destruction. All he was thinking of was Austerlitz, and Villeneuve, who was not ready, could not hold back because *he* knew that there was another admiral on the way, post-chaise from Paris to replace him if he didn't go. That's what will happen to Tirpitz. They will send 150,000 men in transports, with their Fleet, in any weather, fog or storm, irrespective of naval considerations. It will, perhaps, be just exactly at such time when our own men will say: 'Pooh, they'll never come out in this weather.' I hope I shall keep my mind clear and not be misled. 'Will they land?' Well, I want to be very humble about that. It is not a question of superiority of ships, it is a question of the man that hits the target. I think Jellicoe is the man but, again I say, I want to be very humble.

"I employ Admiral Sir Percy Scott in the face of all sorts of opposition. They say to me that he drinks like a fish and has three or four wives. I say to them: 'I don't care if he is drunk every night. I don't care if he has a whole harem. All I know is that he hits the target and that he is making others hit the target.'

"Admiral Sturdee was head of the War Staff. He was a very inefficient head of the War Staff, because he was dogmatic and dull and not broadminded; and so I sent him out to catch von Spee. He covered himself with glory through no fault of his own. That is what I wanted, and now Sturdee's friends all ought to be satisfied. I am,

" Jackie " Fisher

because I have made Sturdee, and I have got the man at the head of the War Staff that I want."

(Sturdee was an old professional antagonist who belonged to the Beresford faction.)

I met Lord Fisher for the last time in the Gardens at Monte Carlo.

" I told you once," he said, " that I always picked men who could hit the target. Unfortunately I could neither pick nor unpick Winston. That's where I went wrong. I liked Winston personally and I held on to him, Dardanelles and all, as long as I could. But——" And the old man who had put more admirals " on the Beach " than could be remembered, looked wistfully out to sea.



FIVE

Carson, the Extreme

I ALWAYS feel a warm glow in my heart whenever I think of my friend Lord Carson, that sinister, dour combination of steel and velvet, of flints and garlands, roses and thorns. You must think of these extremes in considering the personality of Edward Carson, the most feared, the most execrated, the most beloved of Irishmen—the Hard Man with the Soft Heart.

Of all the men with whom I have come in contact over the years, since Gladstone raised again the flag of Irish separation, I recall none, with perhaps the exception of "Tim" Healy, who had more to give in the way of friendship and personal charm and conversational attraction than this iron-jawed, grim-faced, uncompromising, misunderstood child; for when all of him is dissected, when you have weighed and analysed and sorted all his astonishing qualities, the great sum of it is his sweetness of character, his childlike simplicity of mind and his uncompromising sense of honour.

I used to say that I preferred Carson as an advocate rather than as a statesman. I am not so sure after all, for as I write I recall that I went with him to his beloved Ulster in the spring of 1914 just before the gun-running episode, when the Ulster patriots acquired 100,000 rifles in a single hectic and well-staged night landing.

Procession

I was not in the secrets of the conspirators. I went merely as a guest with a number of members of the British Parliament to attend a parade of the newly formed Ulster Volunteers whom Carson was to review in Clondeboye Park, the seat of the Marquis of Dufferin, near Belfast. I was staying with what in the old days would have been termed "genteel company" at Antrim Castle, the seat of Viscount Masserene, a fine house on the edge of the town, a mansion which has since been offered up to the flames by some of the more ardent "pathriots." Among the guests were a couple of Cabinet Ministers from London, half a dozen peers, some Guardsmen, and a great galaxy of fervent Unionist women whose names were best known to the writers of fashion notes. The women lent colour to the collection of conspirators; for that is what the majority were.

Carson and I took a walk on Sunday morning in the little town of Antrim. Suddenly from out of a door came a woman with an ailing child in her arms, then another and another until we were surrounded by men, women and children. We had to stop. They touched his arms. Some of the women kissed his hands and begged him to "touch" the children one after another. Some knelt and all continued to murmur "God bless yer Honour" and "God be thanked for yer Honour."

Straight down the street this scene was re-enacted.

But it was not only in Ireland that the name of Carson was honoured. He came to see me in the country one week-end, during the struggle over the Parliament Act.

We had to stop at Dunmow on the way to my house some miles away, and from out of the houses in the old

Carson, the Extreme

street which once resounded to the tramp of Rome's legions, came shopkeepers and their assistants, bare-headed, and cried: "God bless you, sir! Don't give in!"

The details of Lord Carson's career are just details which can be gathered from any gazeteer or book of reference. What cannot be gained from them is an idea of the sweet simplicity of this man whose friendship is as fine and beautiful as the most delicate flower; who, though his profession caused him to deal so much with chicanery and selfishness and greedy assertion, ever believed the best of things of all people. For, as he once said to me: "No one is really all bad."



SIX

Lady L

THE phrase "No one is really all bad" recalls to my mind a statement on similar lines made to me once by Lady Londonderry, *the* Lady Londonderry, or, better still, Lady L. . . . I refer to the immediate predecessor of the present Lady Londonderry, who is now perhaps the only remaining great hostess in London to recall the gorgeous days that have vanished. The new Marchioness (she has not yet reached that exalted stage at which the public refers to her by her titular initial) is a beautiful woman, a hostess of charm, a diplomat of capacity. To be on the visiting list of Londonderry House signifies either that you are a political personage or that socially you have "arrived." The palace in Park Lane is unpretentious outside, but its interior is magnificent. Aside from a Drawing-Room at Buckingham Palace, there is nothing in London to compare with the splendours of a Londonderry House reception. Lady Londonderry is the daughter of the late Viscount Chaplin, the famous "Squire." She has inherited from her predecessor, the famous Lady L. . . ., all the prestige, the charm and the authority of a great social and political hostess.

The former Lady L. . . . was a magnificent, forceful, much beloved yet feared tyrant. She ruled over a Victorian and Edwardian London which was far different from the

Procession

London of to-day. She drove out in a great gilded state-coach; she was painted by Sargent (in those days an outstanding distinction), she was the feminine Ward MacAlister of British society—the last word in authority. If you were ignored by Lady L . . . you were cut by the others. A dozen ambitious hostesses, duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, and barons' ladies living in great palaces, attempted to wrest the sceptre from her by giving more gorgeous parties, but to no purpose.

Towards the end of the War when we were all of us nearer to the elementals and "rank was but the guinea stamp," I encountered Lady L . . . in Pall Mall *on foot*! It was a sight to remember. There was the famous ruler of society actually stumping along unattended, unknown. It was like meeting the Dowager Empress hobbling on her clubbed feet in the streets of Peking! I expressed surprise at seeing her there in such circumstances.

"Why not?" said Lady L . . . "I do not mind having to walk in the streets alone. We shall all have to do that soon, anyhow. A policeman just helped me across the street at Marlborough House. I peeped in at the gates like a country cousin, for I had never seen all these things from the vantage point of my own feet. To-morrow morning I am going to walk down among the crowd and see the changing of the guard. Do I sigh for the days that we shall not see again? Well, yes; well, no. There were some nice things in our lost life. You see, we aren't really all bad!"

Just like Carson.



SEVEN

"Bobs," V.C.

LORD ROBERTS illustrates the point of fleeting public memory. Some of us will recall the furore made by "Bobs" whenever he showed himself out of doors, particularly in the street pageants which were so frequent in the happy days of sunshine and Victorian innocence. When Lord Roberts came home after forty years of romance and daring (do you remember Kipling's *Ford of Kabul River*?) there was no Briton to stand alongside him for popularity. Even so late as 1897 when he rode on his famous little white charger in the van of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession, the whole pageant sank to nothing in comparison with the huzzas and bravos that greeted the great little soldier.

And then the old gentleman began to have qualms about Britain's preparedness for war. He knew it was coming. He sensed it somehow and he, this white-haired old hero, began to experience the slings and arrows of ridicule and contempt hurled at him by politicians who thought he was a crank.

Lord Roberts was a bad speaker. He could hardly hold the attention of the House of Lords whenever he spoke of the dangers that were confronting us, even though the majority of the peers thought as he did. Nothing daunted, he went on. He even turned himself into a publicity agent

Procession

for his cause, and began to fire written bombs into the newspaper offices, stirring and alarming. He wrote dozens of letters every day by hand laboriously, unafraid and undeterred. Yet this dear little unworldly man who knew nothing besides war and its terror, who was afraid of politicians and shook in his shoes when he had to make a speech, had no more idea of conducting a public campaign than an ordinary child. He knew that newspapers reached the public and that, therefore, they were useful, yet he had no idea of the way in which newspapers were conducted.

I had met him many times at his club, at the House of Lords or at the luncheon tables of mutual friends, and had conducted considerable correspondence with him on the subject of compulsory military training. One morning early I received at my flat in Victoria a telegram from Ascot saying:

“Will be with you at ten o'clock.—Roberts.”

I could not imagine who this was. Who was Roberts? At ten o'clock there presented himself at my door none other than Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, V.C., K.G., etc. He seemed to be as much surprised as I was, for he said:

“I never had an idea that a newspaper office looked like this. When we took over the Free State paper, *The Friend*, after the capture of Bloemfontein in South Africa, with Kipling and Gwynne and some others as its editors, it had no such luxurious fittings.”

I explained as well as I could that this flat in Victoria Street was my private address, and that a newspaper office in Fleet Street and a residential flat were like the comparison between a battlefield and a sylvan grove.

We walked out together into the busy street. The

burden of his conversation was Great Britain's danger in case of war. He was convinced that Germany was preparing to set Europe ablaze and he was certain that Great Britain would become involved. Haldane was War Minister and he was unconvinced. Indeed, he was for his part as strong in his opposition to Lord Roberts and his policy as Roberts was aggressive for his contentions. The pity of it at the time was that Britain was seemingly determined not to be alarmed. I called the old Field-Marshal's attention to Haldane's activities in the direction of perfecting the Territorial system.

"All nonsense," protested Lord Roberts. "All eye-wash. The Territorials are useful but they are not fully trained. We shall be called upon in a hurry one of these mornings to face an enemy more powerful and more ruthless and more efficient than anything we have known, and we shall be unready. That will cost us hundreds of thousands of lives and millions upon millions of money."

"Just mark this," and to be more impressive, Lord Roberts stopped on the steps of the old Westminster Palace Hotel across the way from the Hospital. (It is now an office building. During the War it was the National Liberal Club.) "Just mark this," he said. "We will do no good until every youth in this country has been trained to arms. It is regrettable, but it is true. Conscription alone will save us. The sooner the better, and the more Lord Haldane—who has told us that his spiritual home is in Germany—sets his face against such a course, the more tragic will be the result. So what I want you to mark is this: Conscription will come, and when it comes I hope it will not be too late."

Procession

I would add here parenthetically that what Lord Roberts said that morning all came true. He was one of a handful to sound the warning note. Lord Haldane made light of the old hero's plea. He had wonderful statistics and a lawyer's glibness of tongue to convince his hearers that the poor simple old soldier was just indulging in soldier talk. And in consequence of these repeated Haldanian pooh-poohings, his definite but nervously expressed assurances of all being well when we felt it was not, many of us became convinced that Lord Haldane was merely playing politics and that he was more interested in the Liberal Party than in the safety of the Empire.

So we hammered away at him and finally succeeded in driving him out of public office. How wrong we were was only proved after the War had begun. The Territorials justified Haldane; and I had it from Lord Balfour himself that Haldane's services, privately rendered, without ostentation or hope of reward, in the pursuit of scientific research for war purposes, were so great that they could never be fully described.

"Haldane," said Lord Balfour, "was worth ten army corps—and more!"

That being so, I, for one, regretted my part in the political onslaughts on this man who was a bad politician, a good lawyer, a consummate scientist and, above all, a great patriot. Only I could never forget his treatment of poor dear little Bobs who in the last years of his glorious life cried out in vain "Be prepared!"

I had seen Lord Roberts, as I have said, followed in the streets of London by cheering, hero-worshipping crowds. On that morning in Victoria Street, as we crossed Parlia-

"Bobs," V.C.

ment Square to go into the Palace of Westminster, not a soul recognised him. The policeman regulating the traffic did not see us and so did not clear the passage across the street. Only when we got to the door of the House of Lords did the constable on duty give him a military salute. I shook hands with the hero of Kandahar, the V.C. whose story had thrilled the hearts of thousands of boys and youths for half a century. He walked into the gilded chamber, and as I came away the policeman, who knew me, leaned over confidentially and said:

"Poor old Bobs. 'E's gettin' old. 'E's got the Kaiser on the brain!"



EIGHT

Colossus of Rhodes

WE had a reporter in the *Daily Mail* in the first year of the century who had packed more adventure into thirty odd years than anyone I had then met. His name was Turnbull, and he did almost anything nearly well. He came originally from Manchester where he had been something of a personage as a fist-fighter—skin-tight gloves and all that—and he brought with him to New York, where I first met him, a broken nose, which had not disfigured him, some well-fitting suits of clothes and an amiable manner. So we gave him a job to report glove fights. He did some fighting himself and in fact soon made a sensation by standing up for half a dozen rounds to John L. Sullivan or the earlier Dempsey, the champion of that time, without being knocked out or even down. Presently, after many picturesque adventures, he turned up in London and eventually on the *Daily Mail* where I found him again.

Now Turnbull means nothing to us in this series except as a means to an end. I shall dismiss him in a minute after explaining that but for him I should never have come into contact with Cecil Rhodes, the Empire builder, and I should therefore not now be able to write about Rhodes from close range. All I will say further about Turnbull is that he committed suicide about 1902.

Just before then there was a terrific agitation in the office

Procession

which caused no end of quaking because Cecil Rhodes had complained to Alfred Harmsworth that a *Daily Mail* reporter had purloined from his desk an important document which, aside from the reprehensible nature of the act, ought not in any case to have been made public. It did not take long to discover that it was Turnbull who had perpetrated the outrage. He was much perturbed in mind when he was confronted with the accusation; could not understand that he had done anything more than show a commendable degree of enterprise; expressed great admiration for Cecil Rhodes whom he would not offend for worlds, and so on.

I had to go down to see Mr. Rhodes in his office to straighten things out. The name of Rhodes some thirty years ago was potent. His great figure had dominated British affairs for a decade. Before the Boer War he was equally popular with Briton and Boer in South Africa. He was a hard taskmaster, a generous friend to both factions and a just ruler; for in fact he was ruler of what was then known as the Dark Continent. The name of Rhodes counted for everything clean up to Uganda, and it remained, even after Dr. Jameson's futile, insane, but romantic dash into the Transvaal Republic with a handful of young dare-devils whose cause was just, but whose strategy was that of the nursery. Rhodes was always blamed for the raid, and he never in the slightest manner attempted to remove the blame from his shoulders to those of his bosom friend, Doctor "Jim," where it belonged. Rhodes stood by and the world at large labelled him as a Buccaneer, a Pirate, an Adventurer, and a Robber. The subsequent war between British and Dutch was, of course, ascribed to

Colossus of Rhodes

him, although his intimates knew that he had done much to avoid it, and that in fact he had the greatest horror of war, particularly in the country in which he had striven so hard to bring the two races together.

So I went down to beard the lion in his den. He sat at a great table in a room facing the Old Jewry. There was not much light, but I could see a glint of combativeness in grey-blue eyes, though it was soon dispelled after I had made the *amende honorable*. He was in a communicative mood. He wanted to know the nature of Turnbull's punishment. Was it the custom to dismiss reporters if they copied things on people's desks or took papers from them? Could Turnbull ever get another post as a reporter? And so on.

Then we got on the question of the South African War and—not for publication at the time—he delivered himself of certain judgments of certain public men which would have made piquant reading. During the time of the Kimberley siege, Rhodes had been one of the besieged inhabitants of the diamond town, and he had not always come out victoriously in his frequent encounters with the military who were in charge of the town. Here was a man, Prime Minister of Cape Colony for years, Sir Oracle wherever he went, authority unquestioned, suddenly face to face with a mere infantry colonel who refused to do his bidding, did, in fact, go so far as to tell the great man to go about his own affairs and not interfere with the business of military defence. The Colonel's name was Kekewich, the scion of a West Country family. He was a soldier and nothing else and he held on at Kimberley until Colonel French, afterwards Field-Marshal Lord Ypres, broke the siege.

Procession

In the course of our conversation that day in the city, Rhodes said to me, no doubt with the picture of Kekewich and French in his mind's eye:

"People imagine that I am a warlike sort of person. I am not. I do not believe in war. I think so many things should be tried before going to the arbitrament of war. Some of these colonels think that all you have to do is to cry out 'Attention!'; hold up your sword, and the world will quail before you. Nonsense. I like soldiers like 'Chinese' Gordon, who went through the Taiping rebellion armed with a walking-stick. If Gladstone had not let Gordon down at Khartoum he would have done wonders in Africa without soldiers and guns, and if we had not threatened so much in South Africa——" Here he checked himself as though talking too much, and I left him.

We met on various occasions after that. The most striking of his observations I put down at the time for future reference. Here are two:

"I think in a hundred years all the best parts of Africa will be Anglo-Saxon. I am sure Africa can easily maintain a hundred million white people—and more. I do not think the Boers will die out any more than I think that the French Canadians will disappear. I think the Boers will continue to thrive as Afrikanders but in close imperial union with the Britishers. They will all work together under the British flag; of that I am convinced, for it is of mutual advantage that this should be so."

"German colonies? Well, not much. They will make some good roads and build a number of nice-looking towns with 'turner halls' in the middle, and they will sing 'Deutschland über Alles' in native dialects, and the Kaiser,

Colossus of Rhodes

who is a friend of mine, will visit them from time to time, and then gradually they will be absorbed by the English people of the British Commonwealth."

It is interesting to state here that I always noticed that this world's great Empire builder never referred to the British Empire. He always talked of the "British Commonwealth."

I wonder if the Socialists, who have adopted this title, would continue to do so if they knew that Cecil Rhodes, the hated Empire builder, also preferred the name "Commonwealth!"



NINE

Single-Handed Combat

WHEN I was a boy I had two heroes. One was Robin Hood, whose peregrinations in the Sherwood Forest gave me unending joy and emulative thoughts. The other was "Buffalo Bill," whose fame among the youth of half a century ago almost transcended that of the green-clad Nottinghamshire lad. I read and re-read every story based on "Buffalo Bill's" deeds of derring-do; I knew in my mind's eye every foot of the two-thousand-mile route over which the famous Pony Express of the early 'sixties was ridden from Saint Joe to Sacramento, and how young Cody, then barely sixteen years of age, regularly carried his portion of the day's burden of seventy-five miles across the plains. I could tell you the full highly coloured story of his duel to the death with Yellow Hand the Cheyenne Chief, while the opposing forces, redskin warriors on one side and cavalry on the other, looked on until "Buffalo Bill" had killed his man.

I carried my hero worship far into the later years when "Buffalo Bill" in London, at the head of his Wild West Show, was the greatest social success of the season, and though everything possible was done to make him conceited and unbearable, he remained the simple, unassuming child of the plains, who thought that lords and ladies belonged to picture-books and that the story of Little Red Riding Hood was true.

Procession

I do not remember ever having experienced a greater thrill than on the night that "Buffalo Bill" invited me to take a seat in the authentic Deadwood Coach which was about to be subjected to a running attack by a couple of hundred yelling Sioux and Blackfoot braves led by Red Cloud; to be triumphantly driven off by "Buffalo Bill" himself on his white charger and followed by a mixed force of pony express riders, cow-boys and United States cavalry. It was a great evening in which I realised a good many of my boyhood dreams. Old Red Cloud, himself, whom I had known on his native *terrain*, added reality to the scene by riding straight at the coach in which I was being bumped about alongside the long-haired Major Burke. The old chief pointed his rifle into the window straight into my face, simulating a real Red Skin gleam of hate on his painted cheeks. He was crying out something in the Sioux language which he afterwards translated to me as "For two pins I'd blow your block off!", or words to that effect.

It was all very realistic and the thousands of onlookers were enormously pleased. This scene took place every afternoon and evening, and "Buffalo Bill's" selected guests in the Deadwood Coach, among them the Prince of Wales, considered themselves to be highly privileged in thus rehearsing episodes which had only recently disappeared from real life.

Those of us who are old enough, look back with considerable pleasure on the memory of "Buffalo Bill" on his white rocking-horse charger, a gorgeous figure of a man—one of the handsomest ever seen—all dressed in immaculate beaded deerskins such as the Wild West had never seen, a silver-plated gun in his hand which he fired right, left,



The author, disguised as an amateur painter, in his garden, near Duntrow, in Essex. June, 1934.

Single-Handed Combat

right, left at clay pigeons flung into the air by Annie Oakley, "Little Sure Shot," who rode behind him at full gallop. Not a pigeon escaped.

Cody had rooms next to mine in Regent Street, over Hope Brothers' haberdashery shop. Here he used to regale me with tales of the days when a quarter of a century before he had made a contract with the Kansas Pacific Railway to furnish its navvies with buffalo meat while they were building the railway. He fulfilled the contract and got his nickname, but he also killed so many buffaloes, which had previously roamed over the prairies by the thousands that they were nearly exterminated; and now there are only one or two small bison packs left. None in Kansas where there must have been millions at one time; none roaming in Texas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Iowa or any of the States that once swarmed with wild beasts.

Cody's reminiscences were simply but graphically told. His recital of the hand-to-hand conflict with the Cheyenne Chief at Indian Creek was a classic, and I soon found out that he placed more store on this encounter than on all the other incidents of a life which abounded with colour and adventure.

He was interested in all questions of individual fighting. He would sit and listen for any length of time to recitals of old soldiers who had tales to tell of the Crimea or the Franco-Prussian War. As for fairy stories, he forgot all the world in listening to them.

Several years later, in 1891 or so, "Buffalo Bill" came back to London, and my boyhood hero had grown a trifle more sedate, though even then he was some years under fifty. His taste for fairy-tales had not, however, diminished.

Procession

I had inherited from the then famous Edwin Cleary, railway builder, traveller, impresario, journalist, a Chilean castaway named Miguel who, in the course of a few years, had learned a little expressive English. Miguel was something of a dreamer and a student of mythology, which in the minds of many people has close relationship to matters pertaining to fairyland and the places where gnomes and goblins roam freely. I came home early one Sunday afternoon and was not observed to enter my bedroom from the outer passage by two men who were sitting in my little study. At the desk, with his hands cupped while he was listening closely with apparently all his interest aroused, sat Colonel the Honourable William Frederick Cody, "Buffalo Bill." In the arm-chair, curled up comfortably and smoking one of my best cigars, of which he was a good judge, was my Miguel. He was telling "Buffalo Bill" a fairy story and he was borrowing from Greek mythology.

"Yessir," he said, "Centaurs was hoss men, hosses' feet, hosses' laigs, yessir, run like anythink and heads which talked like senors, and long beards and ver' wild peopels, yessir. But I guess dey got all was comin' to dem by 'Ercules wot fight 'em single 'and same as you. Dis 'Ercules was big strong man like Mister Sandow. Gotta muscle like rope. 'E had large club an 'e call out to Centaurs like dis: 'Come along out you, wot English sailors call "swabs," an' I giva you somethink take 'ome.' Dey come out one by one and 'Ercules 'e gives 'em de K.O. until dere was two 'undred of them on the groun', yessir."

"All dead?" whispered "Buffalo Bill."

"Yessir, all."

I intervened here by stepping into the room. The man

Single-Handed Combat

who had killed Yellow Hand in the sight of two armed forces, turned to me as if he had come out of a dream.

"That fellow 'Ercules must have been a pretty good cuss," he said, "but there aren't any Centaurs left now, are there?"

"No," I said, "they are all dead."

Out in the lonely wilds near Denver, in Colorado, there is a tomb, blasted out of the solid rock on Lookout Mountain. There lies "Buffalo Bill." His spirit roams over the endless country of the Rockies, which he loved, and he may, if he still likes, look up the Centaurs and dare them out to single combat.



TEN

"Tiger Tim" Healy

THROUGHOUT the many years of my association with public men, I find the memory of "Tim" Healy threading its fascinating web of friendship and charm. I first met him in the dark days of Parnell's decline and fall, when "Tim" Healy—"Tiger Tim" he was called—was reputed to be the most sinister figure in Parliament. He had cut loose from his old associates in the Irish Party and had become a political enemy of the man with whom he had once been intimately connected as secretary and colleague. Somehow the relationships of these two eminent Irishmen were never fully understood either by their associates or the general public. Healy was bitterly censured for having "bit the hand that fed him," which was a most unjust accusation, for "Tim" was never Parnell's paid secretary, and though they were closely associated for many years there was never an intimate friendship.

Healy had a great admiration for his chief's many fine qualities, and he never hesitated to proclaim them even after "the Split," but there was not a vestige of affection. I can quite understand this from my own experience of the two men. Healy was a warm-hearted, impulsive, all-giving grown-up boy; Parnell a self-centred, unresponsive, unapproachable human mystery. You could not mix those two entirely foreign souls with any degree of satisfaction.

Procession

I met Healy first at the height of the Irish rebellion against Parnell in the first lurid stages of the great divorce case scandal, which shook all Britain. I had gone over to Queenstown, which is now for some Irish reason known only to the Irish called "Cobh," to distribute among the starving peasantry of the West Coast a large sum of over £20,000 in Bank of Ireland notes, the result of a fervent appeal which my newspaper had made to the "bhoys" and colleens in America. Fifty cents and a dollar apiece had been subscribed under the outburst of love for the old country throughout America, and I had been deputed to pay out the money from village to village through the medium of the Land League's local agents, who were mostly priests. I had engaged the then famous Jerry the Carman to drive me in his outside car. Some day someone will write the lay of Jerry the Carman, the red-bearded poet and storyteller. He was a hold-over of the Arthurian minstrels of saga-time.

"Arrah yer honour!" he said. "It's the grand luck I'll be havin' in dhrivin' yer honour through this stricken land av small spuds an' nawthin' stronger to drink than warther, which savin' yer honour's presence, we'll not be havin' to do for I've pledged yer honour's credit against a dozen of J. J. (Irish whisky) an' a small kaig av stout."

Here then, at the Queen's Hotel in Queenstown, I first met the world-renowned terror of the British House of Commons, black-bearded, snappy, soft-tongued and fiery-tongued "Tim" Healy. He was on his way to Bantry, the place which is now honoured at being mentioned as his birth-place, but was then not so proud of the distinction. I offered him a lift, and so it came to pass that seated beside

"Tiger Tim" Healy

me in Jerry the Carman's outside shay, atop of £20,000 £1 Bank of Ireland notes, a case of J. J. and a small keg of stout, sat Mr. Timothy Healy, Irish barrister and trouble-maker, Member of the Sassenach House of Commons.

We became friends and remained so for forty years until his death.

We travelled to Cork, where "Tim" was not popular at the moment; to Kinsale, to Clonakilty, to Skibbereen, and to Bantry, where we parted, and I went on distributing my largesse as far north as Achill Island. The potatoes were as small as pigeons' eggs, and there was only the fishing to keep the poor people from starvation. It was a melancholy as well as an amusing journey.

Years later, one day in 1910 or so, Mr. Timothy Healy, K.C., M.P., was making his first appearance before an English Court, and by what is called a concatenation of circumstances the case was one involving a charge of libel in which I was a principal; and strange to say too, for once, I was not the defendant; and my opposing counsel was "Tiger Tim," my old friend of the outside car. He lost, as, of course, it was inevitable that he should.

It was, as I have said, his first appearance as an advocate at the British Bar. His reputation as a leader in the Four Courts had long been known in England, but never before had he stood up on behalf of a client before an English judge; and he was, consequently, most naturally anxious to show himself off at his best. His English colleagues from the various Inns of Court paid him the compliment of attending that morning, so that the Court of Mr. Justice Phillimore was crowded with great men of the Bar.

"Now, Mr. Blumenfeld," said Mr. Healy, "you say

Procession

this conversation took place about midnight in your office just after the first edition had gone to Press."

"Exactly."

"Midnight in a newspaper office is a particularly trying hour, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And you are at such a time rather flustered; your mind is not quite as calm as on ordinary occasions?"

I knew what he was aiming at. He was trying to show that in the storm and stress of the midnight edition one's mind is not capable of making cool decisions and that this had affected me on the occasion in question.

"No," I replied, "I always take particular pains at midnight, just after going to Press, to compose my mind."

"Indeed," said my dear old friend as he walked into the trap. "How do you do that?"

"I always compose my mind by reading a few passages from the history of Ireland. That always does it."

"That will do," said "Tim" as he waved me off with a gesture of impatience.

After the verdict, just as I was leaving the Court, a messenger handed me a pencilled scrawl. It was from "Tim." It ran:

To R. D. B.

I knew that time in Bantry Bay
Where you had all those dollars,
That sometime there would come a day
When you'd confound the scholars.

In all the years I've served the laws
I've not met such a witness!
You've torn old Blackstone with your claws;
And I do not call that fitness.

"Tiger Tim" Healy

Now you, dear Blum, come into Court,
Pooh-poohing all our fables—
I ask you, is it friendly sport
To cruelly turn the tables?

P.S.—Please excuse split infinitive. I'm hurried.

T. M. H.

Only once did I see this courageous man quail. I lived for a long time in Morpeth Mansions. In the flat below me there was ensconced the redoubtable T. P. O'Connor, an old colleague of "Tim's" but, for the moment, a political foe. We were just about to enter the lift to go up to my rooms when the liftman said to me:

"Mr. John Redmond has been asking for you, sir. He has gone into Mr. O'Connor's flat."

"Tim" drew back, paler than usual. "I don't want to meet either of them. I'll go back, please." But I dissuaded him and we went on, though he was very nervous to think that he was under the same roof as his two momentary arch-enemies. Later the strain between them was lessened, and "Tim" spoke and wrote eulogistically of both.

I have spent many happy moments listening to this gifted man's erudite talk both at his house outside Dublin, which someone wittily called Healyopolis; and I have been his guest at his Viceregal Lodge which someone with equal wit called "Uncle Tim's Cabin." Always he was the same sweet-natured, wise, beautifully-voiced friend and counsellor. How those men in frock-coats of the 'eighties and 'nineties would have stared to see "Tiger Tim" sitting at the head of the table as Governor-General!



ELEVEN

Lord K., the Adamant

THE only time I saw Lord Kitchener really flustered was shortly after he had gone to the War Office as Minister. His job in life was a more wide-horized, long-distance affair. People with minutes and note-books and memoranda worried him. If he wanted something done he ordered it and the War Office, with its age-old traditions, was no place for direct methods. "Passing the Buck" is what it is called in America, this endless chain of minutes and annotations "respectfully referred" from official to official, A.A.Q.M.G. to A.Q.M.G., A.A.G. to A.G., A.O.D. to Chief Clerk This and That and then back again.

When Kitchener went to the War Office, he found there the most human of red-tape experts in the person of the late Sir Reginald Brade, who filled the mighty post of Permanent Secretary of State for War. Now "Reggie" Brade had been brought up in the machine. Privately he did not fully approve of the creaking contraption, but he worked it loyally and beyond its capacity—until Lord Kitchener came along. Here, suddenly, was a War Minister who wore uniform, who was a Field-Marshal, who assumed military authority and who cut through the red tape inconsiderately, but certainly mostly with an effect that was of immense benefit to the country. Almost his first act on entering the War Office was to foretell the length of the

Procession

War and make provision for it by directly giving orders without further ado. If he had done nothing else the country, the world, should ever revere his memory.

"Reggie" Brade, with the elasticity of a rubber-band, adjusted himself to all these new stretches of authority, and fitted things as well as could be in such astonishing circumstances. Now it had been arranged between us beforehand that in the case of hostilities in which the British were to take part, our correspondents should have a front seat, so to speak, and the newspapers would be enabled to keep the public advised as to the true state of affairs. When Lord Haldane was War Minister he had fully acquiesced in such an arrangement. So when the War broke out in 1914, I made my proper arrangements to send over to France with the Expeditionary Force at least two first-class war correspondents, one of them Mr. (now Sir) Percival Phillips and the other the late Mr. Alfred Stead.

Lord Kitchener, as I have said, was no stickler for routine and red tape. If he found that a thing did not work on accepted lines, he met the situation in some other more direct way. War correspondents, for instance. The French authorities were opposed to war correspondents, and so in spite of our previous arrangement he gave it out that there should be no correspondents. They would not be permitted to hang about the army. He would give permission for an official reporter, a soldier, to be attached to G.H.Q. to send daily bulletins and properly censored descriptions to the newspapers.

That was that. The Oracle had spoken. Let no dog bark. "Reggie" Brade was my friend. He rang me up and asked me to drop into the War Office "casual like"

Lord K., the Adamant

and have a chat. I did, and I was told that as K. had made up his mind with the French we had better give in. I asked him who was to be the War Office megaphone at G.H.Q. to fill the ears and the columns of the newspapers. He told me that Colonel Swinton ("Ole Luk Oie") (now Major-General Sir Edward) had been selected. Now Swinton was highly qualified; a fine writer, a vivid personality and a popular figure with us in Fleet Street—but he was an engineer officer, not a trained war correspondent. Besides, we did not want to be spoon-fed. So I registered a protest and my colleagues did the same.

Presently our various correspondents whom we had sent over on chance began to be harried from pillar to post. Some of them were locked up, and I had considerable difficulty in extracting them. The Army chiefs began to perceive that war correspondents were not wanted, and so they joined in the general exhilarating game of Press chivying. One of my young men, a photographer, was locked up for days near Nieuport with scarcely enough food to keep well. . . . We protested officially to the War Office, which was the nearest we could get to the great Panjandrum.

One day I met Lord Kitchener at dinner at a friend's house. After dinner Lord K. said to me, "I do not see why the papers persist in printing so much rumour. It does not help to keep up the public morale."

"The answer to that," I retorted, "is that you will not permit the newspapers to perform their proper function, which in its way is as important as that of any arm at the disposal of the State. You have muzzled us."

Lord Kitchener took his napkin from the table in front

Procession

of him, fumbled with it, put it back again, let it drop, picked it up and said in a somewhat agitated way:

"I do not agree. I know that correspondents running wild among the soldiers are an uncontrolled danger."

"Very well," I said. "But one day when you will want the newspapers to do things your way, you will find that they do not respond."

"You talk like Lord Northcliffe who came to see me to-day about this," said Lord Kitchener. "We are certainly not going to give the Press a free hand in present conditions."

Now here is the sequel. Through all this time we were led to believe that it was only Lord Kitchener who had set his face against the employment of special correspondents. He never confided to us that it was the French authorities who objected to general correspondents, and that so long as the French were preponderant in men, he could not feel justified in going against their wishes. But Lord Kitchener preferred to let the blame, if blame it was, rest on his own shoulders. As soon as the British force had swollen sufficiently, Lord Kitchener gave instructions for a headquarters' force of correspondents to be established, and they functioned with admirable effect. They had their own château and kept open house for generals who, under the influence of a first-class cuisine paid for by Fleet Street, and the consciousness that the public was at last being properly informed, soon altered their habit of aloofness and even hostility, and began to work hand in hand with the Fourth Estate, to the ultimate benefit of the nation.

There was another time when I saw Lord Kitchener in the role of a kindly and tolerant senior of experience.

Lord K., the Adamant

It was when I went in company with the late Colonel Claude Lowther, M.P., to see the great war chief in Whitehall. Lowther was the last of the Dandies. He was a veritable hold-over from the days of the Count d'Orsay and "Dolly" Capel. He was a poet and playwright, a connoisseur of the arts, a *raconteur*, a soldier and a politician. To sit with him of an evening in Beerbohm Tree's tower over His Majesty's Theatre in Charles Street, Haymarket, and listen to the lightning of repartee between Tree, Lowther, Norman Forbes Robertson and Ralph Nevill, was better than anything that had ever been invented by Rabelais or Sheridan.

In the South African War, Lowther had behaved with such conspicuous gallantry that General Sir Charles Warren recommended him for the Victoria Cross. Unfortunately, Warren, the erstwhile London police chief, had quarrelled with Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., who commanded against the Boers, and Buller was not for taking Warren's opinion on what should and what should not be; so Lowther did not get the V.C. But the people at home in the Lowther country elected him to Parliament from Carlisle while he was still out of the country.

When the Great War broke out, Lowther, of course, did something theatrical. Most M.P.s who were not too old to fight, raised a battalion of local soldiery and commanded them, if possible. Lowther had recently acquired Hurstmonceaux Castle, the oldest Norman brick fortified residence in England, a magnificent house in Sussex, not far from the place in Pevensey Bay where Norman William had made his first bow to England. As a Sussex landlord, therefore, he essayed to raise troops for the War. But he was not

Procession

satisfied with one battalion; he raised a whole brigade which he called the Southdown Brigade, but which quickly became known as "Lowther's Lambs" in compliment to the local and famous mutton of the South Downs. Of course Claude Lowther wanted to be a brigadier, and, like the crusader barons of old, he desired to take his troops into battle. An unkind, unsentimental War Office said "No. Not at first. A tried professional leader should be in charge."

"But, idiots that you are," retorted the handsome *beau sabreur*, "I want it. Don't you know I am a Member of Parliament?"

Still the Eastern Command at the Horse Guards was adamant, and so Colonel Lowther telephoned to me from Cooden Beach, where his 3000 troops were encamped, asking me to go with him next day to beard the Great Bear in his den—the Great Bear being Lord Kitchener.

His Lordship was suave and judicial and just a trifle bored. "Yes, Colonel Lowther," he said, "I am quite aware of the great service you have rendered in raising these battalions, but until you have proved your fitness to command them in action I cannot possibly make you a brigadier. These men will have to go into action. It would be a great responsibility for you to command them in action if you were not qualified. And, by the way, I notice that you are wearing the distinctive tabs of a staff officer. How is that?"

Colonel Lowther drew himself up. "I have the honour, sir, of being the representative in England of Sir Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of Defence, and as such I claim the right to wear the distinctions due to my post."

Lord K., the Adamant

"That's all very well," said Lord Kitchener, looking puzzled. "But I know nothing about you in this connection and I, for my part, have the honour of being His Majesty's responsible Secretary of State for War."

"Sir," said Lowther, with what I should call impertinent respect. "Sir, I am a Member of Parliament."

"I do not know what you mean by that," answered the War Lord, "but it has nothing to do with the command of a brigade, which you shall have if you prove to me that you can command it."

Then he began to fumble with some papers, rang a bell, smiled rather weakly as one does at spoilt children, and looked out of the window.

I was at the door, a quite useless and mute actor in this little comedy. Lowther stood up, clicked his heels with the loudest German click that he could muster, just to show what he thought of military discipline, turned right about and followed me out.

When we got out into the big passage leading to the downward steps, Lowther said in a loud voice:

"I'll force him one day to give me a whole division. He will not dare to refuse me. I am a Member of Parliament."

Poor old Claude! The "Lowther Lambs," three thousand fine upstanding fighting men, went over to France some months later under a dug-out brigadier and his name was not Lowther. It was a bitter disappointment to a fine and gallant soul.



TWELVE

'Charlie' B.

WE have already had in review Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, whose outspoken aphorisms garnished with seaweed and spray and great waves of articulation have never been surpassed on and off the sea. Fisher was a virtuoso in vigorous phraseology and he had only one rival, a rival not alone in the art of delivering the *tu quoque* blow, but also in respect of his professional attainments. That rival was the famous, the ever-popular "Charlie" Beresford, darling of the lower deck, *beau idéal* of the Victorian Back-fisch, hero of the *Condor* episode, which evoked the world-encircling signal from the flagship, "Well done, *Condor*," bosom friend of the Prince of Wales (King Edward), Member of Parliament for years and years—York, Portsmouth, Marylebone—inveterate tilter at windmills, staunch friend and never-relenting enemy. He was Irish to the very core—lovable, efficient, temperamental, courageous and attractive. Old sailors always said that on the quarter-deck he was superb; a heaven-sent leader. On shore he was like a child whom anyone could lead; very much like Lord Roberts, who was a giant in the field, but who, out of uniform, dwindled back to his own stature. Or to make the simile closer still, like Nelson, who was super-super on his own quarter-deck and just "little Nelson" out at Merton Abbey.

Procession

"Charlie" Beresford had two obsessions in his colourful life. One was the British Navy, which he worshipped and for which he several times risked his professional career by resigning high office as a protest against what he thought was policy destined to be detrimental to the Navy. The other obsession was "Jackie" Fisher, his lifelong rival and enemy.

The two were temperamentally and in every other way antagonistic. This was so from the very beginning of their naval careers. Both were imbued with a spirit of enthusiasm for the service. They were its devotees, its slaves. Each prayed fervently for the continued strength, supremacy and glory of the Navy, but each had a totally different view as to how this should be maintained. If Fisher cried for battleships, Beresford rushed into the fray crying for cruisers. If Beresford had a new idea, Fisher coldly elbowed it aside. Fisher was an abler manager and a more astute politician, and he usually won. Besides, he was just a few years senior to the Irish *bon viveur* and that made a great deal of difference. But Fisher never so far forgot himself as to belittle his rival's professional capacity any more than Beresford ever attempted to treat Fisher as a mere nobody. Thus as far back as the *Condor* incident at Alexandria in 1882, over half a century ago, it was Captain John Fisher who sent Commander Lord Charles Beresford ashore at Fort Marabout to keep order, and for that service Beresford was promoted to captain. From that time onward the two fought their lifelong battle which only ended in 1919, when Lord Beresford went to his final haven.

I had many occasions to be an intimate observer of the Fisher-Beresford feud which more than once split the

“Charlie” B.

otherwise great silent Navy into two violent vociferous factions. The Beresfordites were of the old school; the Fisherites of the new, ever demanding change.

I recall an episode of the year 1908 when Lord Charles was in command of the Channel Fleet, and when Fisher was designing new formations and gradually drawing all the ships together for the purpose of establishing what was eventually to be the Grand Fleet. The Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleets were the great commands of the Navy at that time. Fisher was busily engaged in bringing home small craft from the Seven Seas. The Channel Fleet put in at Liverpool, and on board the flagship *H.M.S. King Edward VII*, Beresford the Admiral gave an interview to some reporters. In it he said in effect:

“This is not a Fleet. It is a squadron of battleships, without eyes, for I have no cruisers, etc.”

A couple of days later Lord Charles wrote to me asking me to correct the report that he had granted a newspaper interview on board his flagship. The Admiralty, *i.e.* “Jackie” Fisher, had called his attention to the Liverpool interview and also to King’s Regulations so and so, forbidding interviews, and he wanted an explanation.

“In other words he wants to trip me up,” wrote Beresford. “I gave no interview. All I know is that a few journalists called on me and we had a general conversation; but not for publication, so far as I know.”

I answered that I was most disturbed in mind at not being able to accede to his request, but I could not question the integrity of my most reliable correspondent who had not gone on board the *King Edward VII* merely for a cup of tea; and I added:

Procession

"If you were the last Admiral in the British Navy I could perhaps stultify myself, but surely you will be able to extricate yourself without this sacrifice on my part."

Thereupon next day I received a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, Channel Fleet, thus:

"All right. Letter received. Have told him go hang himself. . . .

"BERESFORD."

As showing the state of affairs at the time, let me quote from a letter to me dated *H.M.S. King Edward VII*, Channel Fleet, at Portland, July 29, 1908:

"I do not know when I shall get to London again, as I am now busy making out result of the manœuvres. I expect . . . J. F. who thought I was going to be foolish enough to leave my base uncovered and risk a fight with submarines, T.B.D.'s, etc., or the unreinforced Battle Fleet which had only one Armoured ship less than me. . . .

"P.S.—Presumably Sir Percy Scott sent the communication to J. F. relative to the lying information of the manœuvres I ordered, which if carried out, it was said, would have caused a collision. This is proved in so far as you can believe the man himself, who is known to be a terrible liar as he told several of my captains that he had done this. . . . The whole thing is worthy of the time of the assassins of the Doges of Venice.

"May all good luck attend you.

"Yours sincerely,

"CHARLES BERESFORD."

"Charlie" B.

When Lord Fisher left the Admiralty at the beginning of the War, after his dispute with Mr. Churchill, I saw Lord Charles a number of times. He chivalrously refrained from expressing satisfaction at his rival's discomfiture and several times said: "There is nothing else they can now do but send for me." He confidently expected Mr. Churchill to bury the hatchet and replace Fisher with Beresford; but the summons never came and he was bitterly chagrined. It was difficult to restrain him, for he was firmly convinced that the country was heading straight for destruction. The following letter shows his state of mind at the time:

" I GREAT CUMBERLAND PLACE,
" LONDON, W.

" 10th December 1915.

" DEAR MR. BLUMENFELD,

" Please excuse dictation.

" Disasters are heaping up one on top of the other.

" You recommended me to sit still, which I have done. Has not the time arrived now for me to come out and tell the truth and endeavour to wake up the people to the grim facts of the case?

" My proposal for a new Government would be:

" Place four sailors and four soldiers as a Committee of Defence to run the War, under the presidency of Lord Kitchener. Such a Committee would enable him to make up his mind, which he cannot do in the Cabinet when heckled by clever politicians and unscrupulous lawyers.

" Put business men over the Departments of State; men who have proved their capability by getting to the

Procession

top of their profession through long experience of business methods.

"We could take this line on Thursday next on the Army Supplementary Estimate.

"Do you think it would be premature, or should we wait until further disasters make it plain to the people that we are drifting towards destruction?

"Yours very sincerely,

"CHARLES BERESFORD."

That, too, was checked and gradually the dear old sea-dog resigned himself to the inevitable. Only occasional growls, mainly against the irrepressible young Winston, were heard from him, and he worked hard and without publicity for the success of the cause.

Beresford was no mere fire-eater. He was a fighting man but he believed in peace above all. Long ago after he gave up his command of the Channel Fleet in August 1910, he wrote to me from Great Cumberland Place as follows:

"I am sure you are right as to the English-speaking nations compelling peace. Something of the sort ought to be done, and soon, or we shall have the possibilities of such a war as the world has never yet seen."

That was prophetic. It was the burden of the talk years before the Great War of all the great soldiers and sailors, Roberts, Fisher, Beresford, Evelyn Wood. No one heeded them. Does anyone heed now? It is still as true to-day as it was in 1910 when Lord Charles Beresford wrote that letter, that the English-speaking peoples of the world could compel peace if they made up their minds that they would dispel war.



THIRTEEN

Humbug and its Prince

"TODY" HAMILTON was the world's greatest Press agent. As a propagandist he has never been equalled. Napoleon's proclamations seem petty and hopelessly amateurish in comparison to "Tody's" many-syllabled pronouncements. As for Dr. Goebbels, the Hitlerite word-painter, he is hardly fit to be mentioned as a propagandist when one thinks of Barnum's chief Press agent; for that is what "Tody" was, Press agent, "public relations officer" of the "Greatest Show on Earth."

"Tody" Hamilton had won the admiration and affection of us journalists by the never-failing supply of adjectives and superlatives with which he bombarded us daily, weekly and monthly in relation to the Circus. His inventive genius was astonishing. As a newspaper reporter he had early demonstrated a gift for dramatic expression and in his younger days everyone had predicted that sooner or later he would become an outstanding member of the growing coterie of serious American authors.

But Mr. Barnum tempted him from the straight and unremunerative path of literature, put him into a gilded band wagon, paid him a vast honorarium coupled with a Byzantine expense account and so for ever robbed legitimate literature of a rare example and substituted a word-smith, the like of whom will perhaps never be known again.

Procession

Dear "Tody," a great gentleman, a richly endowed *raconteur*, a sunlit welcome visitor always; he has been dead these many years. R.I.P.

One day "Tody" came to see me in the *New York Herald* office in the very building which had once been Barnum's Museum where they used to exhibit the fake mermaid and the 160-year-old impostor, Joice Heth, the coloured woman who claimed to have been the nurse of George Washington; "dear little George" she called him. My own room in the building at Broadway and Ann Street was the same apartment in which Barnum had shown "THE GREAT MODEL OF NIAGARA FALLS: REAL WATER."

It was simply a barrel of water which was run over a painted picture of Niagara. "Tody" wanted me to go with him to Bridgeport, in Connecticut, where Barnum's Circus had its permanent home. He promised to give me opportunity for the most absorbing of descriptive articles for the Sunday edition, and I agreed to go on one condition, which was that he should take me to Mr. Barnum himself. That bargain was made and kept.

Mr. Barnum, the greatest humbug on earth, received me with some warmth. He was close on eighty and not over-vigorous. But though his figure had shrunk owing to illness, he was still a big man who gave the impression of bigness in many ways. His eyes had a shrewd, kindly, tolerant light. He had recently taken most fervently to religion, more so than usual, though he was always a religious man. In his later years he was given much to "tags" from the Bible. He was a strict teetotaller, and though he was perhaps the most accomplished public

Humbug and its Prince

prevaricator of his time, he was personally truthful and honest.

I had just returned from London—it was about the time of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee—and Mr. Barnum was intensely interested in England, as the Circus was planning a visit to Europe. This actually took place a couple of years later, but in the meantime Barnum and his partner Bailey were somewhat exercised as to the reception they would have on account of British antipathy, owing to his having taken the idolised "Jumbo," the great elephant from the Zoo, and carried him off to America. It is quite true, and may be a surprise to the present generation, that when Barnum purchased "Jumbo," some five or six years earlier, the excitement throughout England, whether actual or worked-up by publicity, was intense, and serious efforts were made to have the sale rescinded. Jumbo became a fad. Music-hall singers sang mourning ditties; haberdashers produced Jumbo ties and collars; Jumbo sweets were hawked in the streets; parsons made Jumbo the subject of dissertation, and Barnum sat back and enjoyed the advertisement. The old man in recounting this episode to me said:

"The best advertisement we got was on the day Jumbo left the Zoo to be shipped to New York. He must have had an advertising sense, for down by the Marylebone Road he suddenly sat down in the middle of the street and would not budge.

"They tried everything to coax him off his hind legs but he just shook his head and said something in Elephantese which was something like what the French say, 'J'y suis j'y reste,' or in Yankee talk, 'I ain't a goin' ter go!'

Procession

"Poor old George Starr, who had charge of Jumbo, sent me a cablegram saying Jumbo wouldn't get up. What to do? And I answered, 'Leave him where he is. Let him lie there a week if he wants to. The best advertisement possible.'

"Well, we got him over. He was a great sensation, but he drank too much beer, otherwise he might be alive now."

It may be remembered even by the present generation, that one day in 1885 poor old Jumbo, having drunk too much beer, got very tipsy and came into collision with a goods engine in Canada and both came to grief.

Now Mr. Barnum hoped that after this lapse of time the British public would have forgotten; which eventually proved to be the case, for when the Circus came to London two years later it was a huge triumph.

I asked the old gentleman to tell me about his greatest success in showmanship and, contrary to my expectations, he said it was Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale." He had brought her to America after prolonged negotiations and at great expense, and everybody predicted failure, but she was cyclonic in her success.

"I found," said Barnum, "that in order to score with her I had to reverse my entire policy. In other words, I had to stick to facts and let showmanship slide. Jenny Lind wanted no boosting, and I was glad I was able to show the world that I was as good at high-class entertainment as I was with dog-faced boys and living skeletons.

"My greatest thrill, you ask? Well, I should say it was when I took Tom Thumb, the dwarf, to call on Queen Victoria. Please remember, it was 'By Command,' and we just had to try and live up to it and speak only when

Humbug and its Prince

we were spoken to. I just had goose-flesh all over me when little Tom Thumb got too easy with the Queen and said to her, 'All right, lady.' But she laughed and patted him on the head. I was paying Tom Thumb and his Pa and Ma and a school teacher with them all their expenses and £10 a week besides. A lot o' money for poor Connecticut folk in those days."

Barnum himself made half a million out of Tom Thumb.

"The next thrill I got," he said, "was when the Duke of Wellington and Tom had a discussion about Waterloo!"

Here the old showman sat down and chuckled. He stroked his great chin in a sort of reverie and said over and over again: "Three of us—the Dook of Wellington, Phineas Taylor Barnum, and General Tom Thumb, all big men; and Tom, he was just a little bit of a shaver."



FOURTEEN

The "Divine Sarah"

"EVERY boy and every girl over ten years of age should be able to act. Every boy and every girl should be taught to speak his or her native tongue correctly, as we do on the stage. Every boy and every girl, no matter what the social grade, should be instructed in manners; how to stand, how to sit down, and how to walk in and out of a room."

Who was this counsellor of perfection? None other than Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest French actress of all time. It was in her room at the Renaissance Theatre in Paris, of which she was for the moment the proud incumbent, and where she divided her time with tours in America and in the European capitals. Madame Bernhardt was a little woman and her diminutive stature was accentuated by the manner in which she lay curled up in a huge arm-chair. I had gone to see her, at her request, to obtain from her an interview on the rather high-falutin' subject of "The Art of the Stage in its Relationship to Cultural Development." That was her sonorous way of putting it. Actually, the "Divine Sarah," who was a magnificent publicity agent on her own account, was preparing a tour of English-speaking cities in England, America and Australia, and she had an eye far in advance of the commonplace press-agency puffery which confined actress interviews

Procession

to discussions on Cosmetics, Love, and Finery. The Cinema Star had then not made her appearance, and divorce on the stage was not much of a recommendation for public acclamation.

We had a good three-quarters of an hour's chat on a hundred subjects. It was difficult to keep Madame Bernhardt faithful to one line of discussion long enough to finish it. She was off at a tangent on something more vivid, more *à propos*, more to her momentary taste. We talked about Racine, of course, and Molière, and here she was perfunctory and obviously bored; but she maintained her part of interviewee most loyally. Racine's *Phèdre*, she said, was the play which really established her place on the stage.

"Before then," she said, "I admit I was just a *Comédie Française* like all the others, and I ought to be grateful to the memory of Racine, which I think I am, for having pulled me out of the *coulisses* to the orchestra."

I did not quite understand her relation between *coulisses* and orchestra, though I presume she meant what we term "footlights." Victor Hugo had her approval. *La Dame aux Camélias* made her future and incidentally brought her endless offers of marriage as well as certain cures for consumption. Out in the West of America so many people believed that Bernhardt was herself poor little Camille in real life that miners, the most sentimental people on earth, and women in general, sent her flowers and soothing medicines just to show their sympathy for the patient.

That is how this interview went on. We jumped from New Orleans to Buenos Aires and from Rio de Janeiro to San Francisco, with a *bonne bouche* for each town and an



R.D.B. at a City luncheon with Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lady Greenaway. Photo: Keystone.

The "Divine Sarah"

anecdote as well. She spoke of her former ownership of the Porte St. Martin Theatre with regret. This regret must have held her thoughts for years, for a long time after in London, when she had lost a leg and was approaching the end of her astonishing career, Madame Bernhardt referred to those wonderful days at the Porte St. Martin when she had triumphed so brilliantly in *La Tosca* and *Cleopatra*, two masterpieces to which Sardou had given the fire of his genius.

Like all actresses she had a deep predilection for Shakespeare, and *Hamlet* in particular.

"I propose to play Hamlet one day," she said. "It is the best play of all, and the name part affords the conscientious actor the greatest opportunities imaginable. I do not care if it is a man's rôle. I am going to play it one day. I remember once I had a conversation with Edwin Booth, who, I think, was greater than Fechter or Salvini or Forrest or Macready, and he, too, said that *Hamlet* was the play for a great actor and he did not see why I should not do it as well."

She actually did it—now some thirty years ago—and my recollection tells me that the critics said she would be much better occupied in appearing in the parts that she could really play, as for instance Rostand's *L'Aiglon*, which, if anything, established her for ever as the greatest French-speaking actress.

To go back to our original so-called interview at the Renaissance, which was as diffuse as this little memorial sketch. Madame gave me a concise definition of the duties of young people towards their parents, towards their friends and towards society in general, and if all young people

Procession

were brought up on her precepts the world would be peopled by a race of the most unconscionable prigs. The explanation is, of course, that she was brought up in a convent, actually as a Roman Catholic, though her parents were Jewish, and her views on deportment were strictly orthodox. She was insistent on the teaching of good manners.

The apple of her eye was her son, Maurice Bernhardt, whose every wish and whim she indulged. He was ostentatiously installed as her manager. While we were talking, a foppishly dressed young Parisian boulevardier burst into the room, hat on head, and cried "Bon jour, Maman!" He walked over to the dressing-table, struck a loud match and lighted a cigarette, and then with a crash flung himself into an arm-chair. Hat still on head.

As I left the presence of the greatest actress there echoed through my mind her firm dictum about young people, thus:

"Every boy and every girl, no matter what the social grade, should be instructed in manners; how to stand, how to sit down, and how to walk into and out of a room!"

I have often thought of that scene at the Renaissance Theatre—the vivid, enthusiastic, doting, all-giving mother and the flamboyant boor of a son who was the living contradiction of her precepts and the destroyer of her hopes. Madame Bernhardt's various fortunes disappeared through his worthless fingers. The more she received, the more he wasted. Yet she went on slaving for him. She flung herself from continent to continent wearing herself out to find money for the demands of this insatiable bounder. Even after she had undergone an operation which involved

The "Divine Sarah"

the loss of one of her legs, Maurice Bernhardt, requiring money for his pleasures, forced the old woman back on the stage. When she died there was just money enough to bury her. All through her last years this greatest of actresses had struggled with poverty. Indeed, in her final illness there was no money for comforts until close to the end, and in order to get something to go on with, they propped up this poor stricken invalid, put her through a filming process for a Bernhardt film and so procured a little money from royalties. It was a tragic end of a tragedienne.



FIFTEEN

B. M. G.

THE RIGHT HON. "JACK" SANDARS, who died in 1934, unknown to the present generation, but vividly present in the minds of pre-War Britons and familiarly termed by his intimates "the Uncrowned King of England," in contradistinction to the Earl of Derby, who is only the "Uncrowned King of Lancashire"—this "Jack" Sandars of blessed memory, was for long the private secretary to, and intimate friend of, Arthur James Balfour, sometime Prime Minister. As such he was the repository of all the secrets, political and otherwise, and it was to him that you wended your way if you had aught to say to, or to expect from, the great Mystery Man, A. J. B. He smoothed the path for you, or obstructed it if necessary, and to his guidance and care and solicitude much of the Balfourian success was due.

In the end there came the typical Balfourian *dénouement*. The Rt. Hon. "Jack," like so many others before him, was jettisoned to sink or swim as the case might be. I recall the casting off of Mr. George Wyndham, the handsome poet-soldier-statesman, favourite of Mr. Balfour, petted, promoted and envied; advanced from pinnacle to pinnacle in and out of the Cabinet and then dropped like a hot coal from a relaxing fist. But before Sandars went into oblivion he was omnipotent, and men of power deferred to him.

I had been to see Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, some time in

Procession

1903, with reference to the then apparently slight difference between him and Mr. Balfour on the question of tariffs. Mr. Chamberlain was for taxing food—Northcliffe had called it a "Stomach Tax"—and Mr. Balfour's ill-assorted Government of Tories and Liberal Unionists was divided. Lord Goschen, the old Duke of Devonshire, Lord James, and Lord Hugh Cecil, were dissatisfied with Mr. Balfour's attitude and had started a Free Food League in opposition to Chamberlain's Tariff Reform League. The latter was out to tax foreign imports, including food-stuffs, and there was no end of discussion and dissension.

In all this turmoil the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, exhibited a calm, sitting-on-the-fence position. He was for it and yet against it. He urged Mr. Chamberlain to make "Enquiry" to see what the country really wanted, and from this resulted the Chamberlain Tariff Commission which dragged its statistical lengths through months and months of tiresome probing. Meanwhile the rhetorical quarrels in the party increased, and in the end, as all the world knows, the cause of Tariffs received what was then regarded as a death-blow by the disastrous defeat which put Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the Liberals in power for years and sent Tariff Reformers and Unionist Free Traders alike into exile.

I had been to see Mr. Chamberlain, as I said above, and had printed from him a statement which maintained his firm loyalty to Mr. Balfour. There was no definite quarrel between them. Mr. Balfour's mentality, all philosophic doubt, was of the kind that caused him only to take firm action in the face of crisis, and to him these tariff squabbles were probably mere dialectics. It is certain that if he had

gone out irrevocably for or against the Chamberlain policy the course of political events in the Empire would have been shaped otherwise than it has been. It is undoubted that if he had declared for "the whole hog" policy, Empire Free Trade would have been established thirty years ago.

Mr. Chamberlain's statement to me to something of the above effect in the manner of prophecy, had apparently pleased the Prime Minister, who was desirous of knowing if anything more had been said—if, in fact, for reasons of discretion I had withheld anything that he ought to know. So Mr. "Jack" Sandars, the ubiquitous secretary, looked me up and asked me if I would do the Prime Minister the honour of going to tea with him in his room at the House of Commons on the following day.

I had met Mr. Balfour informally many times. He was standing, long, lanky, lackadaisical by the fire-place, dandling a paper-knife, the complete picture of *laissez-faire*; much enhanced by his long frock-coat, his easy carriage, his fascinating smile. He was cordiality in the extreme and mentioned my name once or twice and then, to my surprise, he actually said that he had seen my article in the *Daily Express*. The surprise was this: I did not imagine that, as he never read newspapers, he had ever seen the *Daily Express*, and if he had, that he could remember its title, and secondly, that he could recall my name; for he was notoriously incapable of remembering names. Several times during this talk the power of reiteration served him in helping him to say "Mr. Blumenfeld," but as the conversation proceeded, he lost the name, and every time he wanted to emphasise something he would say, "Mr. ah . . .

Procession

Mr. ah . . ." and then turn helplessly to the Rt. Hon. "Jack," who would jump to the rescue with "Mr. Blumenfeld." "Oh, yes, Mr. Blumenfeld."

It was a most interesting and satisfactory interview and I made full record of it at the time in my diary. . . .

The years rolled on. One day in January 1910, after another disastrous election and before the B.M.G. ("Balfour Must Go") cry became potent in national politics, the great private secretary, the Rt. Hon. "Jack," rang me up and said: "Would you come and have tea with the Chief at Carlton Gardens to-morrow? He is most anxious to see you."

I went. Mr. Balfour, a little older, a little bent, but still alert, stood just as in those old Chamberlain days, by the fire-place, toying with a paper-knife.

"Ah, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . Mr. . . . Ah, ah . . ." again turning to Mr. Sandars. "Yes, of course, Mr. Blumenfeld. I wanted to tell you how much I have appreciated your efforts in the . . . the . . ."

It was a pitiful look that he cast over to the Rt. Hon. "Jack" who was sitting behind me. "Ah, yes, the *Daily Express*. Most wonderful work."

Then followed a long and deeply absorbing conversation on any and all sorts of political, scientific and historical subjects, including a brilliant dissertation on the fine qualities of the Irish by whom he was dubbed "Bloody Balfour" the while he was Irish Secretary. They had expected a ladylike young exquisite to rule over them with a posy of flowers in his hand. Instead he waded through rebellion, ruthlessly, firmly, uncompromisingly, and "Pretty Fanny" became "Bloody Balfour." . . . He

B. M. G.

mused gently over some of his reminiscences and then when our time was up said :

“ Well, well, it was nice to see you again, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . Ah . . . ah . . . oh, well, it was nice. Good day ! ”



SIXTEEN

Oom Paul Kruger

COMING down past Trafalgar Square I noticed on the beautiful new building which has arisen on the site of old Morley's Hotel, a sign, hewn in stone, indicating the offices of the "Unie van Sud Afrika," which is Dutch for the Union of South Africa under the British flag. That recalls to me a remark made to me at Marseilles in October 1900 by Oom Paul Kruger, the fugitive President of the Transvaal Republic who had been driven out of Pretoria by little Lord Roberts. Kruger had arrived in the Dutch steamship which had carried him from Laurenzo Marques to European safety, and on my telling him that the Boer republics were now nearly *non est*, he said: "They will never surrender. We will trek northward again as our fathers did before us."

It took a year and a half before they actually capitulated, and good statesmanship soon healed the wounds of war. Now, here in London, you see in the "Unie van Sud Afrika" the result of wise provision. Campbell-Bannerman gave the Boers a hand in the game and there stands the Anglo-Dutch Dominion of South Africa.

When I met Kruger at Marseilles, there went with me to the docks on a similar errand none other than Doctor Leyds, the fugitive Hollander who had acted as Kruger's Secretary of State. He was the evil genius of the Boers,

Procession

a clever, active, cunning, highly efficient Dutchman without whom Kruger could probably never have carried on his famous diplomatic duels with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary. A third person to greet Oom Paul Kruger was Mr H. R. Chamberlin, the European correspondent of the New York *Sun*. Chamberlin had travelled from London to interview the fugitive for his paper which, like most American papers, expressed much sympathy for the Boers.

Old Kruger was in his state-room in the ship, sitting at a table, ancient top hat, long frock-coat, porcelain pipe and all. His piggy little eyes scrutinised me suspiciously. Then, taking his long pipe out of his mouth and without rising—he was over eighty—the ancient dopper who had given the British Empire such a protracted shaking up, put out his mighty paw and shook hands. For an old man he had an astonishing grip of the hand. I nearly cried out “Outch!”

“And this,” said Dr. Leyds in Dutch, “this is Mr. Chamberlin . . .”

“*Kamberlein? Kamberlein?*” cried Oom Paul in alarm, thinking he had been tricked into meeting his arch-enemy “Joe” Chamberlain. “*Kamberlein?* No. I will not. Take him away!” and he turned to go into his sleeping cabin. There was a look of alarm in his eyes. He was trembling. He had taken off his top hat and in his excitement he let it drop so that it rolled on the deck.

We had considerable difficulty in satisfying Mr. President. Gradually he became mollified. I picked up his hat, which he took with a grunt and put on his head again; and by the time we had come on shore the old man was quite friendly and gave Mr. Chamberlin a signed photograph of

Oom Paul Kruger

himself. Not only that, he gave to that talented American correspondent a particularly interesting but somewhat misleading interview on the causes of the war. According to him the Boers were wholly innocent of warlike preparation. True, they had bought Maxim guns and imported them in boxes as pianos; true, they had taxed Britons and refused them citizenship; true, they gave everything to their Dutch friends, but, after all, was it not their own land, even after they had sold it?

As for myself, he would not give me his photograph since I was a representative of a hated English newspaper; nor would he give me an interview. But he gave me another of his giant handshakes!



SEVENTEEN

“Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!”

WE were discussing the time when England came to her *renaissance*. By this we meant the date of her emergence from the age-long repression of women, with the new outlook on Life—women’s bicycles, motor-cars, bachelor girls, cigarettes; the lighter shades of existence which, put together, marked a change in conduct, particularly with reference to women. We all, six or seven men of the world, had lived in the period of change-over, and we were unanimous that, unannounced, unexpected and unperceived, the curtain went down on conventional England in the first year or two of what has since become known—rather ironically and now derisively—as the “naughty ’nineties.” When we had probed further into the signs and portents which made way for the change, we all agreed that the first sign of the Newer but not necessarily Higher Life came in the form of a high kick on the part of a music-hall singer named Lottie Collins. It was “Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!” as sung and danced by that vivid artist which opened the eyes and ears of a hitherto heavily gagged and convention-swathed public; the song which for several years thrilled and held the English-speaking peoples and caused statesmen, *savants*, policemen, cooks, *débutantes* and even Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, to sit up and listen. And when all the enthusiasts went to see as

Procession

well as to hear, the effect of that high kick from out of a cloud of long skirts and *frou-frou* completely drove away what was hitherto known all the world over as the famous British phlegm.

There was perhaps never a song in the English language which was so sensationally popular, and I have not heard of anything like it in any other country. It was a silly song; a vapid thing hacked out on the spur of the moment by an American minstrel named Sayers and rewritten as an English version by one Richard Morton, who had a vogue on the English music-hall stage forty and more years ago. It was not a success in America at first, but Lottie Collins, a talented young woman from the North country, picked it up and had it reconditioned for her own purposes. Morton's refrain, which was sung by millions of people every day, ran like this:

A smart and stylish girl you see,
The belle of good society,
Fond of fun as fond could be
When it's on the strict Q.T.
I'm not too young, not too old,
Not too timid, not too bold,
But just the very thing, I'm told,
That in your arms you'd like to hold!
Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!

You would not go very far to hear that, I am sure, if you heard it sung by anyone of your acquaintance, or for that matter by any first-class public performer. It was Lottie Collins who ushered in the new era with the last line. Away went prim Hampstead and correct Kensington with the first sudden kick of "Boom-de-ay!" We never understood it, but there it was.

I can best describe this astonishing phenomenon by

resorting to an Irishism: namely, to permit a critic of the time to describe it, as quoted in José Collins' own story; José Collins, herself an artist of no mean qualities, being the daughter of this wonderful woman.

"Taken altogether the performance is like nothing ever seen or heard before on any stage. It is sung in the character of a girl, vulgar but not vicious, and only a little restrained by respect for appearances. The singer is an artist to the tips of her fingers; every note, every one of the poor words of the song, is made to tell to the utmost. They are delivered with a 'conviction' and a sureness of articulation, accompanied with a little knowing shake of the head, that, if it is right art to play to one's environment, is nothing but right art. When the slight restraint that is on the singer is removed, she flings herself into the chorus and the dance that goes with it, a wild, corybantic, grotesque dance that partakes of the character of the most extravagant dances of East and West; something between the passionate *fandango* that came to Spain from the East and the grotesque *can-can* that was born in France. . . . It is a paroxysm of motion and emotion, such a Bacchic frenzy as was well known in ancient Greece, wherein heads and arms and body participate; a gliding run round the whole stage, a frenzied leap in the air, and then the dancer comes to a sudden stop. . . . A thrill runs through the audience, hear it often as they will; the electric throb stirs them again and their enthusiastic shouts and laughter," and so on.

I first saw and heard Lottie Collins do this act at the old Tivoli Music Hall in the Strand, where the Cinema now stands. With me was old Henri Rochefort, the French political refugee who had escaped from the convict settle-

Procession

ment in New Caledonia, and who edited his *Intransigent* in Paris by means of a daily despatch from London. Monsieur Rochefort—he was the Marquis de Rochefort-Lucay—was a man of wide culture and he had a critical mind. We both wanted to see and hear Lottie Collins, who was beginning to be talked about. She began. “Silly song,” said Monsieur Henri. “Banal!” and so on. Then suddenly out of the blue, or rather out of the cloud of *frou-frou* came that high kick and the abandoned dance—the declaration of independence of British womankind. We both sat up, stunned by the impudence of it. Everybody else sat up, stunned in similar fashion. Never did human being go through such gyrations. When it was all over the dancer looked as if she had drained the last ounce of energy from her frail body. On and on they forced her to go. Eventually she gave the same performance with the same eagerness and enthusiasm in five or six other London music halls every evening. She earned thousands, but the exertion demanded its inexorable toll, for in a few years she was dead; worn out.

I suppose I saw Lottie Collins do that Ta-ra-ra turn several dozen times, but every time the woman’s magnetism, her artistry, her demoniac energy produced the same thrill as on the first night. On the evening that we first saw her, Monsieur Rochefort was insistent on speaking to Miss Collins. There was in those days a famous and ancient theatrical manager named Charles Morton, who was subsequently manager of the Palace. Morton, always beautifully groomed and wearing the most respectable of fashionable whiskers, was manager of the Tivoli. He took us round to the stage door. Miss Collins was getting ready to rush

Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!

out, to jump into her brougham and go off to another hall. Her dresser was packing furiously. Her husband stood by the door urging speed. The dancer was modest, flustered, diffident and, in spite of her continued success, obviously flattered by the compliments which the distinguished Frenchman offered her. Incidentally he congratulated the equally modest husband on his distinction in being the husband of Lottie Collins. The husband bowed gratefully. We had perhaps five minutes of conversation but it was rapid, quick-fire talk which tested the mind. Lottie Collins was undoubtedly an unusual sort of woman.

"I found the song in America," she said. "It was not doing too much; got little applause but I saw vast possibilities in it provided I could tack on to it the dance which I had in my mind for a long time; for you should understand that for some years I felt that the best means to break through the silly, hypocritical, hide-bound traditions which fettered English people and caused them to appear so ridiculous in the eyes of the world, could be through a sensational dance. I tried it first on myself. Then I devised the dance, little thinking what it would do. I was perhaps as much surprised as anybody when it broke all records."

Then she and her husband went off to the Gaiety, where she was doing a fifteen-minute turn at £150 a week. I suppose at one time, for a couple of years, with music-hall fees and music royalties, Lottie Collins must have been in receipt of £1000 a week; but when one considers the cost to her in the end, one wonders if it was worth it. Also if we admit her responsibility for the new orientation of womankind, the birth of the bachelor girl, the cigarette addict and the cocktail queen—was it worth it?



EIGHTEEN

Andrew Bonar Law

ON the theory that it is better to be damned than mentioned not at all, I think I may lay to my soul the flattering unction that I have not come off second best in the matter of my association with Mr. Bonar Law, who is modestly described, characteristically so, on his tomb in Westminster Abbey as "Andrew Bonar Law, sometime Prime Minister." My flattering unction lies in the fact that once when I was his partner in a game of bridge, and the game was finished to our mutual cost, he said rather sweetly: "You are certainly the worst bridge player I have ever known." Which wasn't so bad, for Bonar Law knew a lot about bridge. Another time I had the rare privilege of being told by him that "golf is surely not your best pastime?"

This sounds like Boswell and his Doctor Johnson. Unlike Boswell, however, I have had some diffidence in making these public confessions. Boswell gloried in his recitals of Johnsonian rebuffs, whereas I put mine down in a spirit of pure humility. Also I think this is a good way of introducing to my readers a most complex though fascinating subject.

Andrew Bonar Law was the youngest of four sons. His father was minister of St. Andrew's Church in the township of Kingston, now known as Rexton, New Brunswick. The pastorate included the townlet of Richibucto where was

Procession

situated the manse. There were not many people and not much prosperity, but there was a good deal of godliness. It is a beautiful countryside. Mr. Meighan, the former Prime Minister of Canada, in speaking of Bonar Law and his childhood referred to the place thus: "Nature never nestled a child in surroundings more beautiful or scenery more lovely."

There must have been some sort of fairy-wand episode in that vicinity, for how could it have otherwise happened that from this remote, restricted, secluded, far-away provincial and colonial corner of the Empire, there should step forth two children of the New Brunswick manse who would at one and the same time sit side by side as His Majesty's Ministers in the Cabinet of the Empire in London; one of them, indeed, to become Prime Minister and both in their turn to be the residuary legatees and standard-bearers of Joseph Chamberlain's crusade for Imperial Commercial Union and Tariff Reform. Further, I reiterate my belief in the efficacy of the political air of New Brunswick, when I recollect that the present Prime Minister of the Canadian Dominion, Mr. R. B. Bennett, is a contemporary, an intimate friend and a natal neighbour of Bonar Law and Beaverbrook.

Young Bonar Law, as we all know, "came home" to Glasgow at an early age and so became more Scottish than Sauchiehall Street. He brought with him a pair of open, honest, inquiring and adorably kind eyes, a more or less cautious mind. You could, for instance, never succeed in selling him, the metal merchant, a gold brick as a gold brick; the more gold, the more scepticism. He had the ambition of becoming a merchant of the substantial

Andrew Bonar Law

sort. But in buying and selling iron in bulk he did not forget the cultivation of the mind, so that in due course he was well fortified with knowledge that was always of use. Naturally he took to Scott and to Carlyle. I fancy the beginning here was due to their being Scotsmen; and Carlyle put him in the way of Frederick the Great and German. He was fond of quoting Goethe and Schiller and Schopenhauer. At one time when Germany was no more popular than she is to-day, Bonar Law and Lord Haldane shared the doubtful distinction of being the two most prominent public men in England who were familiar with the German tongue. His knowledge of German was useful to him too, for the average Briton is still a one-way linguist and the late War has not taught him that Mars talks many languages.

I recall one day in the War going to see Bonar Law at 11 Downing Street where he was Lloyd George's principal coadjutor in the Cabinet of the Coalition. The King had asked Bonar Law to form a government. He said he would do so if Asquith would join, but the deposed Liberal chief refused indignantly, and so Bonar declined to head the War Cabinet, though he agreed to serve under Lloyd George. There the sad, simple, unassuming retiring Bonar, a mountain of strength and character, led a hectic but unseen life in what he described as "hanging on to the coat tails of that little man and trying to hold him back." It was a perfectly ideal partnership, for Bonar Law supplied what Lloyd George lacked, and Lloyd George contributed the limelight to his partner's lack of fireworks. . . .

I went in to see him at No. 11 Downing Street at about seven o'clock one moonlit evening. The indispensable

Procession

Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Information and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was just going out. He was always just going out or coming in, and it was surely due to his self-sacrificing labour in easing the burdens that over-weighted the shoulders of his friend, that so much of Bonar Law's work was done with despatch and effectiveness. Before I left that evening, shortly before dinner, an air-raid was announced on the way from the coast. It would have been natural, as was indeed the case in so many houses, for the master of the establishment to show either nervousness or concern, but Bonar Law went on talking to me about Prince Bismarck, about whom he never failed to ask when he had the opportunity.

Presently we could hear the anti-aircraft guns playing their cacophonous solos into the air, causing one to wonder not unnaturally, if the next salute from the invaders might not find its billet in Downing Street as well as in any other place. Bonar Law, smoking his pipe, went on questioning me about the Iron Chancellor whom I had once visited in his retirement. He had always supposed that Bismarck was a huge, gruff, ill-mannered boor of a man, and he appeared to be pleased when I pointed out various fallacies in the public estimation of the greatest German since Frederick the Great. Bismarck was, strange to say, a soft-spoken, excessively polite man of the world. He had most gracious manners and he could move a sentimental German audience to tears by his simple, softly employed eloquence; which always seemed to give Bonar Law cause for wonder. Yet when I came to think of it afterwards, Bonar Law's voice and mannerisms were not unlike Bismarck's, soft, intimate, convincing, because there appeared to be no

Andrew Bonar Law

guile in them. Also I had always heard that Bismarck never spoke ill of anyone. He was granite hard and dour when necessary; so was Bonar Law; and as for speaking ill of others, I never heard Bonar Law say an unkind thing of anyone. He could, it is true, be bitterly sarcastic and vitriolic on public matters and on the platform, as, for instance, in his offence-giving comparison of the Liberals with the Gadarene swine, for which Asquith never forgave him; but I know of no one who ever heard Bonar Law give way to an unkind criticism of a personality.

I remember going from No. 11 Downing Street that evening before the air-raid was officially over. The Chancellor, still smoking his pipe, shook me by the hand and with that twinkle in his eye which contrasted with his otherwise wan and saddened face, bade me "good night" with the parting admonition to "be careful and don't get hit by one of our pieces of anti-aircraft shell. I am told they are particularly partial to editors."

Which recalls the fact that we were all more concerned about the deadly effect of our own defensive weapons than about the invaders.



NINETEEN

Presidents I have Known

A PROCESSION of Presidents and ex-Presidents of the United States of America whom I have known passes in review before the eye of memory. I have always cherished the recollection of a journey from Washington to New York late in the 'eighties in the company of the gargantuan Grover Cleveland, who was massive in so many ways. We were both bound for the metropolis to attend the same dinner of the Fellowcraft Club, a literary organisation of which the President was to be the guest and I was a member. Mr. Cleveland was distinguished as the maker of telling phrases, sound, logical staccatos which, but for their refinement of tone, would at the present time be classified under "wise-cracks." Thus, in advocating a lower tariff he said tersely that "it is a Condition that confronts us, not a Theory." "Public office is a public trust." I am not so sure as to his authorship of this phrase, but he used it and was credited with it. He coined one phrase which, like Winston Churchill's "terminological inexactitude," created a nation-wide sensation. In one of his messages he spoke of a state of affairs having sunk into "innocuous desuetude." That phrase sent all America scurrying to its dictionaries.

It was Mr. Cleveland who first put into my head the idea of an Anglo-American understanding.

Procession

"My own people," he said to me, "came from Great Britain two hundred years before I was born (it would be nearly three hundred years now) and I have always felt that in the future somehow the two great branches of the race must come together."

I recalled this remark some seven years later when President Cleveland in his later term of office sent his famous Venezuelan message to Downing Street, and caused all the war tocsins on both sides of the ocean to sound the alarm. It was always held that his firmness on this occasion prevented a conflict, for it forced immediate attention, whereas a weaker President might have allowed matters to drift to the inevitable point of disaster.

Then there was the ebullient Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, whose light seems to have become dimmed by the greater shine of his later namesake Franklin. It has been my privilege to talk to both Roosevelts. The difference between them is abysmal. Theodore was flashing, brilliant, active, buoyant, direct, forceful, compelling and adorable. Franklin is suave, charming, intellectual, Fabian, Machiavellian. Theodore was meant for chain armour and a two-handed sword; Franklin for the velvet and lace and flounces and ribbons of the courtier. I do not know whether to say that one figure is to be preferred to the other. My choice, schoolboy-like, would have been for "Teddy," the rough rider, the *beau sabreur*, the hell-for-leather hero of the Deer-stalker novels. I suppose that is due largely to the fact that I knew him well, whereas my acquaintance with the Father of N.R.A. is slight and formal.

My first contact with Theodore Roosevelt was when he came back from the cattle country of Western Dakota,

Presidents I have Known

where he had sojourned in the "Bad Lands" for three or four years. He had returned to New York with a political mission. I was now the editor of the *Evening Telegram* and, again at the Fellowcraft Club, at about the same time as the meeting with Cleveland, we had many talks about his ambition to create a real American civil service. At that time the Roman dictum "To the Victor belong the Spoils" was all-potent in politics. Office-holders were swept out by the thousands by winning parties. Eventually, as a member of the Civil Service, Mr. Roosevelt did his part in reducing the "spoils system." He told me this:

"I am going to be a Civil Service Commissioner (appointed three years later). Then I am going to be Police Commissioner of New York and I shall clean up the police as it has never been cleaned before. Then I propose to be elected Governor of New York State, and finally I shall exercise the prerogative of every American boy and claim the right to be appointed President of the United States."

I smiled, of course. Later, in 1910, ex-President Roosevelt was in London after his scientific expedition in Africa. We met again.

"Do you remember," he said, "that I told you twenty odd years ago in New York that I would become Civil Service Commissioner, and that I would add 20,000 officials a year to the permanent list?"

I did.

"Do you remember I said that I would become Police Commissioner and that I would clean up the police?"

I did.

Procession

"Do you remember what I said about becoming Governor of New York State and President of the United States? Good guessing, wasn't it?"

The Institute of Journalists gave Colonel Roosevelt a dinner at Stationers' Hall in Ave Maria Lane on the occasion of this visit. He was lost in admiration of the beautiful Grinling Gibbons carvings of the historic hall.

"Why aren't you journalists back here in your old home?" he said. "This is your place."

It was a prophetic remark. It gave me an idea, an inspiration, and now as Deputy Master of the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, under the Mastership of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, I have the honour and gratification to point to the fact that after centuries Fleet Street has gone back to its spiritual home; just as Colonel Roosevelt, the man of vision, said it should.

More Presidents? Yes. There was the gigantic Taft, more Herculean even than Daniel Lambert. They say that when he took horseback exercise to keep down the ever-increasing weight it required a couple of stout fellows to get him up. He was amiable and erudite, and he shone better as a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court than as a President, to which post the indefatigable Theodore had "engineered" him.

President Wilson and I had ten minutes at London's Mansion House. The Lord Mayor gave him a luncheon. The Fourteen Points were still agitating the world as, indeed, they have agitated us ever since. Our ten minutes were taken up with a discussion, not of any international points, but of the places in the city not far from the Mansion House where Benjamin Franklin worked and played during his

Presidents I have Known

stay in London before the Revolution of the Thirteen Colonies. I imagined from the wearied President's avidity about the printer patriot that he was a decided Franklin "fan." Otherwise I gathered from Mr. Wilson's remarks that he liked the Mansion House and its peaceful atmosphere better than the White House at Washington.

Also there was the enigmatic Mr. Harding. He was a fine-looking man. He owned a newspaper in a smallish town in Ohio, and he had the sort of unreasonable respect which so many small-town newspaper people appear, quite inexplicably, to have for big-town journalists. Being one of the latter myself, I found myself on one occasion while I was visiting America to be the recipient of a message inviting me to run down to Washington to have a chat with the President. I went. Naturally the office of chief magistrate of the great republic entitles the incumbent to all the outward show of respect which one can muster. In this case I found myself rather the king and not the courtier. Mr. President wanted to know all about European news-gathering methods—and about Mr. Lloyd George. He was so much interested in the personality of Lloyd George that most of my time was taken up in describing him. The President did me the signal honour of coming out to the door with me.

Mr. Hoover was a contented, studious, much-liked man when he lived for ten years or so in London. He wrote here a most interesting and elaborate book on Mineralogy, and its presentation copies which he bestowed on his many friends must have cost him a good many pounds. We were all pleased when the United States put him at the head of the Free Food Distribution Enterprise in Europe. I used

Procession

to observe him at work in London and often remarked on his extreme efficiency and industry. Equally when he became a Cabinet Minister in America we in London applauded the promotion. None of us ever foresaw the fate of his administration, which was not due to any of his shortcomings. I hope that some day history will give Mr. Hoover as President proper credit for his honest, honourable and tireless conduct in that trying office. How could he know that the country had "slopped over," to use the elegant terms of his opponents?

And now we come to the President who impressed me enormously, who was strange and diffident and difficult of approach. President Coolidge was a shrewd and careful and lucky man. He could have stood for another term and he would certainly have been re-elected; and if he had, Hoover's fate would have been Coolidge's fate. Shrewd man. He must have known something.

I was in America again in 1928 at the head of a mission of British editors. We went to see Mr. Coolidge at work. I had to do the introductions and, before making the final call with my colleagues, one of his Ministers had arranged a private talk with the President on the previous day. I asked my friend:

"What is the President like?"

"Well," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "he is all right when you know him. He wants a lot of knowing."

"Is he amiable?" I asked.

"They say," said the Minister, "that he was weaned on a pickle."

So I was determined to meet an unpleasant, sour-faced, unimpressive, hard-bitten Yankee type, the sort of thing



WHEN COOLIDGE SMILED!

President Coolidge in the White House grounds, with a group of British Editors. Sir Esme Howard, British Ambassador, at the President's right. R.D.R. at his left.
"I said to the President: 'They tell me that you never show a smile. I wonder if you can.' Mr. Coolidge whispered to me out of one side of his mouth: 'That's a load. I'll show you that I can smile as well as anyone else.' Let's both smile as though we had a joke between us." People said: "Look! the President is smiling."

Presidents I have Known

we had been prepared for, to judge from his photographs. Mr. Coolidge was pleasant, courteous, formal but not too affable, and the interview was more or less perfunctory. The next day I took my colleagues to him in the company of Sir Esme Howard, the British Ambassador (now Lord Howard of Penrith), who first presented me formally and then left me to present my colleagues. The President took us into the office where all the Washington correspondents were assembled for their usual bi-weekly interview with him; he being quoted, not as the President, but as "a White House authority." When that business was over and the Washington correspondents had departed, the President turned to me and said:

"It's a fine morning. Let's be photographed."

A photographer was sent for and we went out into the White House grounds and were disposed in a group, the President in the centre, the Ambassador at his right and myself on his left, with the others ranged on each side. I said to the President:

"They tell me that you never show a smile. I wonder if you can."

Mr. Coolidge whispered to me out of one side of his mouth:

"That's a libel. I'll show you that I can smile as well as anyone else. Let's both smile as though we had a joke between us."

The resultant photograph astonished everybody. People said: "Look! The President is human after all. He's smiling!"



TWENTY

History-Makers

I AM not old enough to remember either George Washington or Lord North, Napoleon or the Duke of Wellington, but I was once young enough to encounter, all in a heap so to speak, six great American Civil War personalities alongside a lamp-post, like ordinary corner loafers. It was at the junction of Thirty-third Street, Sixth Avenue and Broadway in New York, one fine afternoon close on fifty years ago. There, standing in a little group, my incredulous eyes saw General "Phil" Sheridan, the world-famed cavalry leader; General William Tecumseh Sherman, the man whose "Marching through Georgia" exploit will tell for many centuries the story of a military epic; his brother, Senator John Sherman, the statesman; General Winfield Scott Hancock, one of the heroes of Gettysburg; General Franz Sigel, the German revolutionary soldier who became an American general ("We fought mit Sigel") and never won a battle; and General FitzHugh Lee, a Southern *beau sabreur*, kinsman of the picturesque and gallant Lees, including "Light Horse Harry" Lee, Robert E. Lee, Stephen Lee, and all the other Lees of Virginia.

There they stood gossiping, these six old gentlemen whose names belong to American history, the two Shermans, tall, distinguished, wrinkled, aristocratic, towering over fussy little "Phil" Sheridan, whose hard-bitten face gave

Procession

indication of the iron character of the man; Hancock, a great giant who looked like a Norse god; Sigel, sturdy, very German still, in spite of his many years of exile, and FitzHugh Lee, the youngest by about a dozen years, debonair and handsome.

Lee was one of the first of the defeated Confederate generals to attempt a reconciliation. He succeeded in the end and when he died he was one of the group of former rebel officers who had regained their status in the U.S. Army.

I recall that this generous gesture caused much discussion here in British Army circles. I had occasion after the Cuban War to take General "Joe" Wheeler, the celebrated Confederate cavalry leader to the War Office in Pall Mall when he was here on an official visit as a major-general, restored to the Army List after thirty or more years. Lord Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief, a keen student of the American Civil War, Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., the Adjutant-General, and Colonel Henderson, the military historian, whose *American Civil War* and *Stonewall Jackson* are used as textbooks, were all gathered in the room of Sir Fleetwood Wilson, the secretary.

General Wheeler was the Confederate cavalry leader who had so harassed Sherman's advance to the sea as almost to cause the Northerners to be defeated, and he was in consequence a great hero with the British cavalymen. Lord Wolseley said to Wheeler:

"General, we are delighted to see you here and more so in your restored rank as a major-general in your original service."

"Thank you, my lord," said little "Fighting Joe."

History-Makers

“I am glad to have your good wishes. If I could live long enough I should think that by the same process of evolution I might be restored to the original rank of the Wheelers in England; for my ancestor had what was then a commission at Worcester—on the wrong side and he managed to get away. But I have always faithfully regarded his advice to his son, which was ‘Keep all on!’ ”



TWENTY-ONE

The Mechanised Prince of Mecca

HERE is another maker of history of a later date—Lawrence of Arabia, who is equally well known as Aircraftsman Shaw. So many books have been written about him that it seems futile to attempt to say any more. I have no personal knowledge of Colonel Lawrence, the princely-garbed leader, who moved thousands of Arab camel-men hundreds of miles across deserts and sand dunes; of the Sir Galahad who did so much to make it possible for Allenby to fling Turkey out of the War, and who will go down in history as one of its most romantic and enigmatic figures. I only know Lawrence the mysterious post-War Fellow of All Soul's at Oxford, the dethroned Prince of Arabia and finally as Aircraftsman Shaw in faded blue uniform, mud-bespattered from the quick dashes to town on his motor-cycle.

My first contacts with Lawrence are unforgettable. He came to see me in Shoe Lane. He walked into my room inconspicuously dressed, holding a leather bag such as solicitors used to carry, and stood at my desk. Then I noticed the face, the eyes. Never have I met a more striking personality, and at once I understood why Feisal, Abdullah, Allenby, Chetwode, George Lloyd, Winterton, all came under his spell. Never in the talks we had did he

Procession

speak of himself, but he always had much to say about Arabia which he knows so well.

We went out together. He ate sparingly and seldom more than once a day. When he came to see me, he always carried his little bag, and when he left me at night he would walk for hours in the quiet streets behind St. Paul's and in the city.

Then he enlisted, and one day Aircraftsman Shaw, R.A.F., was announced with an intimation that it was Lawrence in disguise. He came in, mud-bespattered, happy-looking; said he had never been more content. Few people knew that this Colonel in the Army had enlisted in the Air Force. He asked me to guard his secret. I got ill and was away for some months. In the interval someone in the office learned the story which could not of course be a secret long, and "the beans were spilled." It was awkward, but he lived it down, and stayed on through considerable difficulty.

We kept in touch and I asked him one day by letter if he would write something over his name on the subject of Arabia and Mesopotamia. Here is part of his characteristic reply:

"One word from you and I'm in outer darkness again. So for Lord's sake keep calm.

"Do you know I so hate the Arabian business that I'd give all the world (if it were mine) to wipe the record of it off my slate? The only consolation is that I never made a half-penny out of it. Nor will I, rumours of profitable publication to the contrary.

"So there you are. Publicity (*quorum pars magna estis*) has taken away

The Mechanised Prince of Mecca

" (i) My pre-War job.

" (ii) My pre-War name.

" (iii) My All Soul's Fellowship.

" (iv) All the poor opportunity I had of a fresh start
to make a living.

And you suggest more of it!

" Hoots!

" Yours ever,

" T. E. SHAW."



TWENTY-TWO

Ministerial Pundits

So we jump from the leader of the Arabs to the leader of the Tories, equally enigmatic, equally unexpected. Mr. Baldwin used to give us the impression of being so modest and retiring that he could not possibly attempt to do anything that required decision or initiative. Yet beneath that diffident manner we, his pre-War friends, knew that he carried something in his knapsack. I used to tip him for high office and he was quick to scoff in reply. He walked down Fleet Street with me one night after dinner at our mutual club. I may say, parenthetically, that my repast was a complete dinner; Baldwin's was the refreshment appertaining to ascetics and Ghandi-like people. He was one of the most sparing diners I had met.

As I say, we walked, like Dr. Johnson, down Fleet Street, and the man who afterwards settled the American Debt came into my editorial room, sat opposite me for an hour or two watching with fascinated eyes the *Sturm und Drang*, the vortex, the typhoon, of a newspaper office. The editor of twenty-five years ago used to read proofs, suggest leader subjects, curse sub-editors, talk on the telephone to Ministers, M.P.s, comedy queens, police superintendents and Paris correspondents, and entertain distinguished idlers all in a helter and welter of excitement, throughout which the test was whether one could keep

one's pipe alight and so maintain a certain sense of *sang-froid*.

I remember the future Prime Minister arising dazed from his chair and saying as he left me in the whirlpool: "Good night. I wouldn't and couldn't do this for all the honours and emoluments in the world."

Now that Mr. Baldwin has been twice Prime Minister and is no longer in need either of sympathy or admonition, I have often said to myself: "I wouldn't have that job for all the honour and emoluments in the world."

You see an editor can always curse sub-editors while they are at work. A Prime Minister or a party leader never really curses anyone audibly and so there's no safety valve.

Which reminds me that there is another Prime Minister in my locker—the Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald. I have for many years been one of Mr. MacDonald's journalistic colleagues (I love to hear him on the Radio from Washington or from London or Lossiemouth, talking about his co-leagues) and we have had many a tilt in print in the past, but we have always held a mutual respect for one another which, on my side is much enhanced by the fact that he would prefer to be what he always was, a journalist rather than a politician. Only, as a journalist, he was, from my point of view, always wrong.

I am not disclosing a secret when I say that Mr. MacDonald has confided to me his heart's desire, namely, that he hopes one day to have leisure to write the life of John Knox. He must hurry up then, for there is another eminent bookman to whom I refer elsewhere, namely, Lord Beaverbrook, who hopes also in the sere and yellow to do John

Ministerial Pundits

Knox. Then there is my friend John Buchan who harbours and cherishes a similar ambition. I should love to be able to have before me John Knox as he would be portrayed (1) by Ramsay MacDonald, who would make him a pure Scotsman; (2) Beaverbrook, who would present him as an Imperialist; and (3) Buchan, who would introduce his Tory intellectual.

There must be something in Scotland, like heather and haggis, which causes men of such varied mental tempo to turn back to the man to whom "one mass was more frightful than 10,000 armed enemies landed on any part of the realm."

Have I any other Prime Ministers? Yes. There was Mr. Asquith for whom I always had an enormous sympathy, mainly I presume because of his mental poise and his ability to get away from insurmountable difficulties. He could shoo off a troublesome complication with an agility, a kindly persuasiveness and an earnest plea which generally brought him relief, though he did not thereby succeed in dispersing the trouble. Personally throughout many years of political differences in which as the editor of a newspaper I usually had the last say and not always the softest, Mr. Asquith showed in private a kindness and a forgiving quality which endeared him.

He never failed for years to address me whenever we met as: "Good morning, *señor*," or "*Bonjour, capitaine!*"

I was for long under the impression that he was having his little joke with me. In July 1912 Mr. Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, invited me to be one of his party on board the Admiralty yacht the *Enchantress*. It

Procession

was that famous occasion, during a great review of the combined Fleet, when Mr. Churchill, a civilian Minister, took the salute as the great ships went past. The Prime Minister was on board; so were all the Lords of the Admiralty, and there was much discussion afterwards as to Mr. Churchill's right to take the salute. Anyhow it was most picturesque.

General Sir John French, later Earl of Ypres, who stood beside me said: "If I had Winston's assurance I would be the greatest man in the Army. As it is I am only commander at Aldershot!"

When Mr. Asquith came down from the bridge where he had been standing with the First Lord and the Admirals and some naval attachés he came towards us and began to talk to me about Dreadnought battleships and submarines. I was surprised at his detailed knowledge of naval technicalities. Presently he said: "You'll agree, Captain, that we have advanced a long way in submarine development." And all I could say was: "Yes, Prime Minister, that is so."

Later that afternoon, while Sir John French, Lord Riddell and myself were waiting for the special train which was to take us back from Portsmouth Dockyard, I talked for a while with the Chilean Naval Attaché. He said: "There's a funny thing about Mr. Asquith. Whenever he meets me in mufti he addresses me as 'How do you do, Mr. Blumenfeld?' and when I am in uniform he looks puzzled."

Now this Chilean captain was a good-looking sailor and I did not flatter myself on my resemblance to him. Yet that was Mr. Asquith's puzzle. So we two went back and

Ministerial Pundits

presented ourselves to the Prime Minister, each in foreign fashion pronouncing his name.

"I'll know better the next time," said the Prime Minister.

The next time we met he said: "*Bonjour, monsieur le capitaine!*"



TWENTY-THREE

Kings of the Ring

SOMEONE asked me the other day if I remembered Heenan and Sayers the prize-fighters. I had to admit with some reluctance that I was not really entitled to the credit of so many years. Then, on casting back my mind I found that I could nearly reach those eminent professors of the bare fist in that I had twice shaken hands with "Paddy" Ryan, many times exchanged salutations with the redoubtable John L. Sullivan, had been honoured with the right to call Mr. Charles Mitchell, "Charlie," and was likewise taken into the confidence of "Pompadour Jim" Corbett, otherwise "Gentleman Jim," who died only recently. This galaxy of fighters came so close on the heels of the aforesaid Heenan and Sayers, that, on reflection, I found that the question as to my having known them did not after all seem so bizarre. I have always had a warm-hearted feeling for pugilists, if for no other reason perhaps, than that they so obviously play their game with zest and a meticulous sense of honour and chivalry. These big men of the prize-ring never failed to impress me with their view of professional obligation. They would be profuse with abuse of their opponents, but once in the ring it was seldom found that one of them would wittingly break the rules. "Paddy" Ryan was a rough-hewn giant with a peasant's outlook on life. His job was to fight and to beat his man if he could,

Procession

fairly, and beyond that he had no interests. I saw him after he was heavily defeated by Sullivan. He was deeply humiliated, but said that Sullivan had beaten him and that was the end of it. "But the next time——," always the same hopeful prophecy of "the next time," which in his case never came.

I knew Sullivan well. He was a great calf of a man with perhaps a little less brain than Ryan. He loved the adulation of the crowd and glowed under the patronising encouragement of the great ones of the world. I came back to London with Sullivan and his party after the amazing drawn fight at Chantilly in March 1888 where he and Mitchell had fought for three hours and eleven minutes to the extent of thirty-nine rounds. It was a vicious, gruelling battle full of ferocity and bitterness from round to round; with perhaps as much ferocity among the spectators as there was within the ropes; yet after it was all over and the two battered gladiators had finished, there was no more vituperation than there is after the ordinary boxing meeting. It was not a mere boxing match. It was a clash of scientific giants, as deadly in their interest as any that was ever shown in the hearts of ancient sword-fighters.

Sullivan derived great joy from the fact that the Prince of Wales of the time (King Edward VII) had presented him with a scarf-pin and that he could boast the friendship of Admiral Sir Harry Keppel, an ancient and most popular sportsman of the day. He had made a public appearance, in evening clothes—he had a fine red silk handkerchief tucked in his evening waistcoat just to show that he was a real blood—and when he had concluded his few carefully rehearsed remarks, he clasped his hands Chinese fashion,

Kings of the Ring

shook them at the audience and said, "I am, yours truly, John L. Sullivan." He was a great man who had so-called great men running after him, proud to know him. There was a popular song at the time to show the extent of Sullivan's popularity. Its refrain was:

"I've shook the hand that
shook the hand of Sullivan."

From which it will be seen that you could derive credit even from having had a remote contact with the great fighter.

Mitchell was a different kind of celebrity. He was a true London *gamin* who knew the ropes, not only those of the ring but of the world. He could wear a dress suit with becoming grace, and if he chose he could converse in plain, sound English without recourse to "lingo." He moved in a fast set which had its headquarters at Romano's, then the centre of ultra-Bohemians directed by Abingdon Baird, a Scottish millionaire, and the Marquis of Aylesbury, the "coster peer." Mitchell married a daughter of "Pony" Moore, the partner of Moore and Burgess Minstrels in Regent Street; and for years he alternated prize-fighting with boulevardiering in London. He was never the match of Sullivan as a fighter, but he had the courage, the audacity, the self-assurance of a hundred men added to a self-assertiveness which put doubt and misgiving into an opponent's heart; and that appears to be a valuable asset in an assailant.

There came along about that time, some forty to forty-five years ago, a long line of giant heavy-weight fighters, and it was my duty and interest to come in contact with most of them. Thus I saw Slavin the hulking Irish-

Procession

American defeated at the National Sporting Club by Peter Jackson the black man. The flower of British aristocracy, headed by Admiral Keppel, Lord Lonsdale (even then), Lord Albemarle, Lord Methuen, then a Guard's Colonel, and so on was present; and in later years I saw this once-acclaimed Slavin walking down Fleet Street in the uniform of a Canadian private soldier, almost forgotten.

I have had discussions on art with "Gentleman Jim" Corbett who defeated Sullivan, and on literature with Mr. Eugene Tunney who has grace of manner as well as a swift punch. Once I crossed the ocean in the old *Majestic* with Mr. Corbett as a fellow-passenger, and he regaled me with his recitals of visits to the Louvre and the National Gallery and his preferences as to David and Bougereau and Millet and Delacroix and Romney. He showed both discernment and sentimentalism, for in his view Boucher's *Family Scene* was the most charming thing he had seen. Also I had occasion to observe his soft heart, for on the next night, or rather early the next morning, in a thick fog off the Banks of Newfoundland we ran through a Nova Scotian fishing schooner and sank her. My room was on the upper deck and I stepped out to see what had happened. It was just getting light. You could see a few feet of sea below, not beyond. Pieces of wreckage were in the water. I saw a man swimming and grasped at a life-belt to aid him. The belt was heavy. A hand reached out to help me. It was Corbett's. We threw the belt overboard. The head went down just as we threw the belt, and did not come up again. Too late! Corbett turned his face to me, running with tears. Then he went

Kings of the Ring

below. Yet they said that when he was in the throes of a battle he was steel and whipcord.

Well then, let us pass along to Mr. "Joe" Beckett, whom I have seen so many times in the ring and none more regretfully than on that astonishing night when Georges Carpentier dropped him so quickly that we had hardly begun to settle down in our chairs below the platform; let us survey Mr. Gunboat Smith and again Monsieur Carpentier, and Signor Carnera who has been so aptly termed the Human Alp; and young Stribling and Mr. Bloomfield, who used to be named Blumenfeld (I presume he changed his name because he did not wish to be confused with me!); and finally the most astonishing little fisticuff virtuoso in history, namely "Jimmy" Wild, than whom, as the "Barkers" used to say, "there is none other." I have never been a great follower of ring fighters. My calling has put me in touch with theirs for obvious reasons, but I am certainly glad of it, if for no other reason than that it so often gave me the opportunity of watching this astounding little creature Jimmy Wild in action; showing the co-ordination of mind and matter, the electric mind flashing its incomparable decisions as no machine could possibly do it, and proving again that brains and a stout heart working in unison can never be defeated except by a better combination of the same qualities.



TWENTY-FOUR

"Come into the Garden, Maud"

HENRY IRVING, who had been playing Tennyson's *Becket* with increasing success, in spite of the chilly reception it had originally received from the critics and the public, showed me a note from Lord Tennyson saying that he was anxious to know more about Ada Rehan, the actress who was to play Maid Marian in *The Foresters* under the ægis of Augustin Daly. The first performance was to be at Daly's in New York, and the old laureate, now over eighty, was feverishly anxious that this play should be acted by one who would justify his belief that he was really a first-rate playwright.

Tennyson, like so many others, could not understand why play after play from his prolific and pertinacious pen, in spite of undoubted dramatic merit, should fail to please. He had been writing plays for nearly a quarter of a century, beginning with *Queen Mary* which Irving produced at the Lyceum in 1876, followed by various pieces, all coldly received and soon abandoned. The old German saying, "*Schuster bleib by deinen Leisten*" (Cobbler stick to your lasts), held good here, too. The poet laureate was a superb poet but as a playwright he was just a mechanic.

Irving suggested that I should get in touch with Lord Tennyson at Haslemere and give him the information first-hand about Augustin Daly, about Ada Rehan, about

Procession

Daly's Theatre and so on, and he said he would write to the old gentleman as well. I wrote down what I thought would interest Lord Tennyson and in due course he replied, asking for further information. Also he said, while he was about it, he would like some advice and guidance on another matter affecting a charitable bequest, and would I be so good as to come down to Aldworth, his house near Haslemere and lunch with him on such and such a day. Would I? Would you, if you were asked to lunch by one of the world's outstanding figures, as he was then and had been for so many years?

Down I went to Haslemere. You did not go by motor in those days, for there were none; nor were there any elegantly equipped electric trains as now. I drove in a "growler" from the station to Aldworth at the appointed time. A servant said that his lordship had gone for a walk but would be back shortly. Would I wait in the little morning-room at the right? I went in. The walls of the room were covered with photographs and prints ranged side by side according to the Victorian custom. They must have been enormously interesting and I would have liked to examine them, but there was in the room a large, unfriendly-looking dog who growled menacingly every time I made a move towards the inspection of the treasures. . . . I sat in that room for over half an hour. Then it occurred to me that perhaps I had been forgotten; so I pulled one of those then prevalent thick bell ropes to summon the butler. This personage appeared presently, appeased the dog and advised me to walk straight down a path near a gate where his lordship was sure to appear on his way back.

"Come into the Garden, Maud"

Down I went, and sure enough, two hundred yards away appeared the figure of the author of *Maud* and the various *Idylls*. He was a tall, imposing-looking man; larger, even in his great age, than I had anticipated. I recalled Carlyle's description of him fifty years before when the Sage of Chelsea wrote:

"One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusky, dark hair; bright laughing hazel eyes; massive, aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking, clothes cynically loose, free and easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in the last decade such company over a pipe."

There he came, a great wide-awake hat on his head, a grey shawl over his shoulders such as Mr. Gladstone and his like used to wear, his shaggy hair and beard still forceful looking but less dusky and dark. I began to compose to myself the speech I was about to make at the encounter. As we got nearer I took off my hat and said:

"Good morning, Lord Tennyson!"

He had not seen or heard me. His eyesight was very bad and I imagine he was day-dreaming. At any rate he pulled himself up in surprise at being accosted and said:

"What's that? Who are you?"

"Oh, I am Blumenfeld, come down to lunch. . . ."

He probably did not hear that very well either, for he raised his stick in the air and said:

Procession

“ Go away. I do not know who you are. What do you mean by coming here to molest me? ”

I saw it was useless and as he stamped on still shaking his stick, I thought it best to let bygones be bygones and do without my lunch! When I got back to town I found a telegram saying that it was all a mistake and would I come another time when I would be met at the station as I should have been this time but for a confusion in dates. I had not been expected.

I never went again. The old poet began to ail and for some time before his death took little interest in the affairs of the great world which he never knew, but which knew him and for a while looked upon him as its most precious ornament.



TWENTY-FIVE

The Greatest Actress

ONE day, some years ago, I stopped my car outside the house of a friend and neighbour who wisely lives in the unspoilt, ever-fascinating mediæval backwater of the Dunmow district. There are a dozen or more of us, kindred spirits who inhabit Jacobean or earlier period houses—restored and otherwise—where we work, play, talk and dream. Some of us are writing folk; others are artists or musicians. The district has unfortunately become known as a “literary colony,” with the result that Sunday afternoons are given up to townsfolk who motor down just to have a look.

When Mr. H. G. Wells lived there it was always easy to divert the stream to his greater lion’s den. But he has gone away and now we all have to do our bit. As I began to say, I stopped my car outside Mr. Gwynne’s house in the way we have, without ceremony or invitation, and walked into his garden. I heard voices. Three little children were sitting on the lawn listening earnestly to an old lady in a great shady hat. She wore large horn-rimmed spectacles and she accompanied her beautiful, measured voice with graceful gestures of her hands.

“And then,” she was saying, “the beautiful princess opened her eyes. What do you think she beheld? What

Procession

do you think? The most magnificent prince of all the world. . . . And then she spoke. . . .”

Here the old lady looked up at me and smiled enchantingly. I took off my hat to Ellen Terry, for she was the speaker and congratulated her on her perfect delivery.

“If you go on like this, milady” (remember she was Dame Ellen Terry of the Grand Cross of the British Empire, entitled to wear a sash as well as an order), “if you go on like this, milady,” I repeated, “you will one day be a very good actress.”

Ellen Terry bestowed on me that bewitching smile which even at her age, nearly eighty, enabled her to lasso the hearts of her admirers.

“Yes,” she said, “I have heard that before. It is going on for seventy years since I first heard it; I have always been told that I would *one day* be a real actress and though I have been told it in various forms throughout all the years of my career, I still love to hear it. Years and years and years ago—the world has grown younger since I think—we came up to London from the provinces to the Princess Theatre in Oxford Street, where Charles Keane was managing and I got the part of Mamilus in the *Winter’s Tale*—a small boy’s part. I was a tiny thing of seven or eight. I knew all about stage-craft and voice production and gesticulation. I breathed stage-lore and so I spoke my few lines at rehearsal as if I knew all about it. And I shall never forget Mr. Keane coming over to me, patting me on the head and saying:

“‘My girl, if you go on like this, one day you’ll be an actress.’”

The Greatest Actress

"I was very proud. Well, I went on trying to be an actress and, indeed, I had considerable success, so that pretty soon I was engaged to play Katharine to Henry Irving's Petruchio at the Queen's in *The Taming of the Shrew*. That was the first time I met Irving, the beginning of our fifty years of professional association. On the very first day of rehearsal Mr. Irving said to me:

" 'I like your way of mastering the intricacies of this part. My dear young lady, if you go on like this you'll one day be a most effective actress.'

"Wasn't that sweet of him? He was always like that."

We remember Ellen Terry substantially in our little colony, with a memorial designed by Sir Alfred Gilbert, R.A., in the parish church of Little Easton near Dunmow. It is a beautiful piece of craftsmanship. The church stands beside the great tithe barn which the Countess of Warwick handed over for private theatricals, and is now owned by Mr Basil Dean. Here on the rough-hewn stage many a fine performance has taken place and several times with Ellen Terry before the footlights, reciting from a gradually diminishing memory but with that same charm and earnestness that she would have put into her effort if her audiences had been kings and queens and ambassadors, instead of just ourselves and the natives.

Her stage-manager was always the late Mrs. H. G. Wells, "Jane" of blessed memory, who, Ellen Terry agreed, was herself an artist. To this village there came from afar the visitors in quest of Mr. Britling in person, and they used to come to our "first nights" to wonder how all this talent,

Procession

on and off the stage, could take so much trouble "just for the fun of it."

To the world at large Ellen Terry will always be known as having reigned as a great stage beauty and artist for a lifetime. To the villagers of our little mediæval district she will ever be remembered as the sweet old lady who recited to us at the Barn Theatre, and who told such lovely stories to the children.



TWENTY-SIX

The Baccarat Case

I CANNOT, at the moment, think of more than two or three people, beside myself, who were present in Court during the long and absorbing trial of the Baccarat Case in 1891. Aside from several members of the Wilson family, the Hull shipowners, at whose house, Tranby Croft, near Doncaster, the now historic drama was enacted, I can only recall one witness who is alive to-day. He is Major Berkeley Levett, who was then a young subaltern in the Coldstream Guards, a brother officer of Sir William Gordon Cumming, the latter the most fashionable, the most sought after, and by virtue of his social eminence, the most influential Guardsman in London.

A letter from my chief, James Gordon Bennet, in Paris, came to me late in November 1890, directing me to inquire as to the identity of the baronet who was proposing to sue several people in what was then known as "the Prince's set," in order to defend his honour against a charge of having cheated at cards in a country house during Doncaster race week. My chief added sententiously:

"This sounds very much like 'Bill' Cumming, who, as you know, is an intimate friend. If it is so, please see him and stand by for anything he may require—publicity, defence or money. He does not cheat, though I agree with Lady de Grey who thinks it may have been a case

Procession

of 'Scotch economy' on his part; trying to save a few pence."

I saw Gordon Cumming and "stood by" throughout in spite of his firm refusal to be stood by.

It is difficult in the present era to explain exactly what this scandal signified.

Sir William Gordon Cumming was a soldier of distinction; not a youth, but a man close on fifty. He was more feared than popular in society, but he and the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) were intimates, and it meant much to include him in a shooting or week-end party; the hall-mark, so to speak, of social eminence. He was not rich but he certainly was not poor. He had a fine country seat in Forfarshire and a town house in Green Street. He was on the road to high command when his fellow-guests at Tranby Croft accused him of having cheated at baccarat, and this story, in spite of the pledge of secrecy, soon found its way into the seething channels of drawing-room gossip; whence, in the end, it was all displayed in its most vivid and dramatic colours before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, with the Prince in the witness-box and the two most eminent of British barristers for and against. On the one side Sir Charles Russell, himself later Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief Justice, and on the other Sir Edward Clarke, and in the body of the Court such an array of aristocratic witnesses and spectators as had probably not been assembled in a Court of Law since the unhappy days of Queen Caroline.

The Prince sat on the Bench, dressed in a grey frock-coat, and holding a grey top hat, the while he leaned forward on his walking-stick, a sartorial accompaniment in those



The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, B.R.H., the Prince of Wales, Master; R.D.B., Deputy Master, November, 1934.

Photo: *Wide World Photos.*

The Baccarat Case

days to every gentleman's costume. When he stood up to take the oath (it must be remembered that he was not immune from this process, since the Prince is still a subject of the Sovereign) he looked in a questioning way first at the stately old judge and then at both counsels. Then he pulled himself together, answered the questions put to him in a monosyllabic fashion and resumed his seat.

I sat all through the trial alongside Colonel (afterwards General) Stracey, commanding the Scots Guards, the senior officer of Gordon Cumming and the most fashionably dressed officer in the Army. Those who in recent years met "old Stracs" for the first time, noted the eccentricities of the ancient dandy's dress. He lived to be ninety, but he never altered the old-fashioned cut of his clothes.

Colonel Stracey got terribly excited in Court every time something was said with which he did not agree. In the end I had to change places with Lord Coventry who had been one of the house party, for during the cross-examination of one of the witnesses, the gallant colonel had pinched my arm and leg so fiercely that I carried the marks for weeks; and poor Lord Coventry in turn was subjected to similar but fewer signs of Stracey's emotion. It meant something in those days to be an Earl!

When it was all over—against him—and the Queen, through the *Gazette* had "no further use for the services of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir William Gordon Cumming, Baronet," and after *The Times* had devoted its first leading article to the case, ending with a severe criticism of the Prince for having been mixed up in the affair, I continued my duty and "stood by."

Sir William had offered to break his engagement with

Procession

Miss Garner, the daughter of a New York Yacht Club Commodore, but she, too, gallantly "stood by;" and so, on the next day, after marriage in London, the ex-Guardsman and his bride went home to Scotland. There was no question there as to Sir William's position. At Altyre the town was beflagged and the people dragged the carriage through the streets with a band in front.

I was walking in Pall Mall one afternoon, thirty years later, and there I saw Sir William Gordon Cumming, the man who had once known two out of three men he met in that historic avenue. Now, an absentee for years, he knew few people.

He stopped and talked for a minute. He said:

"I have just seen poor old General 'Stracs.' What a tragedy!"



TWENTY-SEVEN

Le Brave Général

All for the Love of a Lady

It was always a mystery to me, as it must have been to thousands upon thousands of others, why General Boulanger was for so long the idol of the streets in Paris. There was nothing heroic in the man's composition. He was a good enough soldier, and not a bad War Minister. Yet it was said of him that he was the first War Minister after the French defeat of 1871 who really gave a thought to the comfort and condition of the soldier. Nor was he an astute politician. He was vain, of course, almost to coxcombry and given to what in Tammany is known as "trimming"; but there was no depth in the man. Still, there he was, the people's darling who was expected at last to provide for them that much yearned-for *revanche*, so dear to the heart of all France. They wrote a stirring music-hall song for him, and Paulus, the greatest patter-singer in France, sang it, and incidentally made himself almost as famous as Boulanger himself. Le Brave Général had but to put on his uniform of *général de division*, with its flaring great sash across his shoulder, mount his prancing charger and, thus equipped, pirouette down the boulevards on the way to the War Office. Speeches were unnecessary. He

Procession

had but to ride out and Paris was his; and, as always, what Paris felt, was reverberated throughout France from the North where he was born, to the South where they have always cheered the man on the horse.

What a chance he missed! *Cherchez la femme?* Certainly; but even with the lady in the case, if George Ernest Jean Marie Boulanger had been endowed sufficiently with the spirit that dares and does, the history of Europe would have to be written to-day in another sense. He had always managed unwittingly to pick quarrels with the professional politicians, but never was he strong enough, or rather, never did he pull through enough to come out victorious.

His first great mistake was to show ingratitude to the royalist duc d'Aumale who had originally put him on his horse and made him a brigadier-general. When Boulanger became War Minister under Freycinet, he made war on his royalist benefactor and drove him out of the Army. Then he had the misfortune to upset old, then young, Jules Cambon, who had him recalled from Africa. He had for some time been the bosom friend of Clémenceau, but this did not last long either, for in the end the "little Tiger" induced M. Goblet to rid himself of the turbulent hero. But through all this the streets of Paris rang with the cry demanding the return of "le Brave Général," who had in the meantime been relegated to the command of an Army Corps at Clermont Ferrand, with orders not to come to Paris without leave.

Well, the story of Boulanger is fairly well known, even to the present generation, which will know that he did break his leave, but that on the occasion when it was essential for the proposed *coup d'état* that the General on

Le Brave Général

his horse should be in Paris ready to make the stroke, he did not turn up. An Empire was beckoning to him. Instead of coming forward at all speed to grasp the crown, the sceptre or the symbol of whatever it was that was aimed at, he held back to keep a tryst with the woman he loved more than power or pomp. He did not get to Paris. The *coup d'état* fizzled out. His erstwhile adorers shrugged their shoulders and said "*malheureusement!*" The Bonapartists and the Bourbons both held on to him hoping still to profit from his vast popularity, but from now on it was hard going.

Boulanger's political opponents succeeded in having him tried by a military tribunal composed of generals, and they dropped him from the Army for having been absent without leave!

Next came a term as a civilian and a senator. Every senatorial district in France wanted him for its own particular representative, and Boulanger could have accomplished the impossible even then; but, as I say, he was not astute, and he was still terribly in love with a lady whom he could not marry for the reason that she already had a husband.

So finally the Prime Minister, Constans, I think, had a warrant issued for him on a charge of conspiracy. Boulanger fled.

He came to London after some desultory sojourning in Brussels. Here, in London, in Portland Place, I saw him on a day late in 1889 while I was passing through. He had been tried and condemned for treason, and so knew that there was no chance for him in France.

When I saw him in the morning-room of his London

Procession

house he looked older than his fifty-two years. His well-trimmed beard was showing faint tinges of grey. His blue eyes were troubled. He was rather carelessly dressed; frock-coat, of course, but his general appearance was that of a man who had run a race ineffectually, and now that it was over, did not care very much about anything.

I asked him why he had not brought about the *coup d'état* which had so repeatedly offered itself to him.

"I should think, General," I said, "you could have carried your positions without opposition at least half a dozen times. Like Napoleon Bonaparte you could have made yourself Emperor at any time in the past four years."

Le Brave Général walked up and down the room, his hands behind his back.

"You are mistaken," he said. "Never at any time could I have succeeded without bloodshed. The Government were always suspicious of me and always alert. They were prepared, as it was their duty to be, to oppose me with force. I could have put greater force in opposition, but I could not contemplate the idea of causing the death of any of my countrymen, and so I never put it to the test. I think they were right to institute proceedings against me, but I do resent the suggestion that I ever acted in a treasonable manner."

This was the gist of his case. The interview lasted for an hour and a half. At the end the General suddenly pulled himself up and said:

"You will do me the favour not to have my remarks made public. I have said things to you that might involve others who are less able to bear persecution than myself.

Le Brave Général

I therefore ask you to regard this interview as private. I am sorry I spoke."

It really did not make much difference at that time what Boulanger said. His act of running away had for ever destroyed any chance he may have had of becoming the head of the French Government either as a civilian, as a soldier or as a dictator. In other words "his goose was cooked."

I saw him several times after that. Then he went to Jersey to live and was not happy there.

About a year later he did the most picturesque thing in his career. He had gone to Brussels where the lady for whom he had sacrificed his all had died some months previously. He went to her grave and shot himself.

By that time France had almost forgotten le Brave Général.

Some years later, in Paris, Monsieur Clémenceau talked about his experiences in America a generation before. I led him in talk up to the Boulanger episode in which the fiery little ex-mayor of Montmartre had played so large a rôle.

"Boulanger? Boulanger? Yes. I used to believe in him and I got Freycinet to keep him in the Cabinet. But he wasn't a Radical at all. Nor was he a Royalist. He was, however, a most attractive man and he had nice manners. But, my dear sir, are nice manners any good to a man who is expected to overthrow a government? No one ever said that Bonaparte had nice manners, or for that matter any manners at all. I'm not very good at manners myself!"



TWENTY-EIGHT

J. E

THERE was a large gathering at the Carlton Hotel one evening for the purpose of consuming a Lucullan banquet in celebration of some sort of professional occasion. The guests were mainly professional men, engineers, electricians or something like that, and at the top table sat, as usual, the customary grey-beard selected swells who always lend tone and dignity to banquets. At the Chairman's right stood a vacant chair and in front of that chair on the table, propped against one of the glasses, was a card bearing the notice that the place was reserved for "the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Birkenhead." His Lordship was to make the Speech of the evening and the crowded banquetting hall attested to the attraction of his name, for it was always certain that with Lord Birkenhead as principal speaker the promoters could expect a large attendance.

There had been a long and anxious wait for the arrival of the guest, and finally the nervous Chairman had ordered the assembly to go into the hall to begin dinner without him. Time went on and long past the hour when the toast of the King is drunk to be followed by the oration, and still there was no Birkenhead. The next toast on the list had already been proposed when far away at the entrance to the room there appeared the never-to-be-mistaken figure of Lord Birkenhead. An obsequious attendant was

Procession

showing him the way behind the serried line of diners. He came doggedly on, looking neither to right nor left, until he came just behind me on the way to the Chairman's place. I had no idea that he had seen me but as he came up behind he put one hand on my shoulder and whispered in my ear:

"What is all this about?"

I said quickly: "It is the So-and-so Engineers," or whatever it was; I have forgotten.

"Thank you," said Lord Birkenhead and walked on. He shook hands solemnly with the Chairman, muttered a line of apologies about having gone to the wrong address and so on and sat down. He took a couple of sips of champagne, and as the toast-master pronounced sonorously the request for "pray silence for the Earl of Birkenhead, Knight Grand Commander of the Star of India," there followed that deep silence which is generally the tribute of appreciation to the greatness of genius.

Then to my astonishment he launched out into an obviously unprepared speech on engineering, on science, on mechanics, on energy, on concentration, on impulse and enthusiasm, so that no matter what might have been the calling of any listener present he could without doubt consider these learned remarks to have been addressed to himself. At the end he quoted Beaconsfield's dictum that "no conjunction can possibly occur, however fearful, however tremendous it may appear, from which a man by his own energy may not extricate himself, as a mariner by the rattling of his cannon can dissipate the impending waterspout."

It was a triumphant effort. Lord Birkenhead sat down, exchanged a few amiable words with the Chairman while

"F. E."

the applause was still thunderous, and in a few minutes, without having eaten anything, left the hall again to fulfil "another engagement."

An hour or so later I went into the card-room of an adjacent Club. There sat my Lord Birkenhead, armed with the familiar giant cigar. He turned his head from his cards as I came in and said, "Who did you say those people were to whom I spoke to-night?"

It was in this card-room that "F. E." was once an actor in a characteristic scene. For some years before he became Chancellor, he had been in the habit of going to the Club every evening before dinner to play a round or two of bridge. Like most men of quick wit he was an atrocious player. He seldom won. His opponents who played, not necessarily for money but rather for the enjoyment of a deep-thinking pastime, tried time and again to dissuade him from playing, but he was an obdurate man and insisted on going on losing every evening two or three pounds. That was not very much for a man who was earning £20,000 a year at the Bar. Two or three pounds, anyhow, meant very little to "F. E." at any time after he had become a success in his profession. He was princely in his munificences, and so the nightly contribution to the card-table did not give him a moment's cause for reflection. The game instead gave his busy mind just that recreation which it required.

One day they made him Lord Chancellor. Now, the Lord Chancellor, the fountain-head of all honour, the Keeper of the King's Conscience, the Sponsor of Judges and Bishops and magistrates, does not, among other things, play cards.

Procession

Before taking his place on the Woolsack, "F. E." began to make arrangements to take possession of the long-disused palace of the Lords Chancellor at Westminster, where there were thirty-odd apartments and no bath-rooms or lifts. Incidentally he never lived there, because there was at the time a great wave of Economy, so that the Board of Works and the Treasury between them made it impossible for the ex-Smith of Birkenhead to entertain in the grand manner as befits the successor of so many historical Chancellors.

The farewell game of bridge between Lord Birkenhead and his bridge cronies took place with solemn rites in the card-room of the Club in Pall Mall.

"Gentlemen," said the Lord Chancellor as he rose from his chair after paying his usual losses, "gentlemen, I have played my last game of bridge in this house. I now leave you to go to a larger House." Whereupon a gentleman who had for years been a profit-sharing member of the coterie at "F. E.'s" expense, rose likewise and said:

"My lord, we all regret the necessity which takes you to a larger House. We on our part must now, perforce, seek *smaller* houses."

It must not be inferred from these little anecdotes that Lord Birkenhead was an inconsequential, casual trifler. He was far from it. He was, for instance, a great lawyer. His judgments as Lord Chancellor are referred to in the Chambers of the Temple with deep respect. His scholarly handling of intricate legal problems are the subject of students' discussions; his administration of the great office of Chancellor added lustre to the House of Lords. He was above the petty officiousness with which so many highly

"F. E."

placed people surround themselves, for he was always approachable and anxious to prove his friendships. Above all he was an advocate endowed with the greatest possible courage and an original mind.

I once sat at lunch with Sir Edward Carson (Lord Carson) and Sir F. E. Smith. The one was Attorney-General, the other Solicitor-General. Smith was explaining the reason of his having been knighted. "There was no escaping it," he said, "for the law officer has to accept a Knighthood whether he likes it or not. There was the case of So-and-so who on being appointed Solicitor-General was informed that Queen Victoria would confer on him the customary honour of Knighthood. He did not want to be a Knight and so he expostulated to the Lord Chamberlain by letter. In reply he received a curt message:

" 'The Queen expects her law officers to belong to the Order which she designates for them.' "

"So that was that. For my part, in view of that order, I have made no protest though I would prefer to remain plain Mr. Smith. You see, there is perhaps a bit of snobbery about that. I think I like being the tip-top Mister Smith in the whole world. There are more Smiths than Jones or Browns or Cohens; and it is a distinction to be the head of all these. If you put a title on it, the simplicity goes."

At that luncheon, Carson, Smith and I discussed various advocates. I asked them who in their view, aside from their own undoubted claims, was to be considered the greatest advocate before the Courts of the time. Both answered at once: "Horatio Bottomley."

"But," I protested, "he is not a lawyer. He's a company-promoter."

Procession

"Quite true," was "F. E.'s" reply. "If he were a professional lawyer he would be the greatest advocate at the Bar. That honour is reserved for our friend Carson; but Bottomley, a layman, is certainly the greatest advocate who pleads before our Judges."

Carson agreed except that he felt that next to Bottomley not he but "F. E." was the most talented pleader.

The next day I ran into Bottomley in King Street, St. James's, where he lived. We stopped and talked about a case which was soon to come up and in which he proposed to conduct his own defence.

"Tell me, Bottomley," I asked, "who in your view is the greatest advocate at the Bar to-day?"

"Well," he said, "I can't make up my mind whether it is 'F. E.,' or Carson. They are both superlative. Carson can kill with a phrase; 'F. E.' with a sentence. If you ask me who are the *three* greatest advocates now in England, barrister or no barrister, I should probably put them in a bracket thus: Carson, Smith, Bottomley. You observe I am modest anyhow."

Lord Birkenhead was indeed two personalities. The lawyer, and judge, efficient, painstaking, industrious, brilliant on one side and the *flâneur*, the man-about-town, the yachtsman, the sportsman, the man with the big cigar and the never-failing *bon mot* on the other.

He and I had many discussions on careers. He was always interested in what other men were doing, had done and were going to do, and he had no illusions about himself. He adored his family, he loved his friends and he treated his enemies with the degree of detestation to which they were entitled. As for himself he put down in one of

his essays his views as to what might be said about him—and others—by posterity.

"A man who undertakes public life," he wrote, "is rather like a man who publishes a book. Within reasonable limits he challenges observation and relevant criticism. And indeed he frequently makes it about others. Such a one cannot claim that candid and honest examination of his career should cease with his death. He has deliberately played for a great and a public stake. Just, therefore, as his acts and general character reasonably challenged and received attention in his lifetime, so in due relation to the interest and importance of his career must he expect that an unmalicious dissection will continue after his death."

I went to "F. E.'s" funeral at Charlton. It seemed impossible that here in this peaceful countryside this man who in his fifty-eight years had risen so high, had lived so effectively, so picturesquely, so almost defiantly, should be content even in death to remain quiescent. It was a long journey to take from town, and the number of distinguished men and women who travelled down to see his ashes laid away attested to the friendships which he had formed and kept.



TWENTY-NINE

Five Kings Opposite

My friend King Kalakaua of Hawaii was a fine, upstanding sovereign, who believed in the Divine Right of Kings and other interesting appurtenances of feudalism such as the tabu and an occasional human sacrifice. He was a great copper-coloured Kanaka, with a fine pair of whiskers, well trimmed and oiled, and he wore over his uniform the *lei*, the Hawaiian floral boa now devoted mostly to cruise visitors on arrival. He looked what the chroniclers would love to call, "every inch a King." I had been despatched to Honolulu just before this interesting island potentate was forced to give way to revolution. His native population, led by the descendants of foreign missionaries, thought it was time that Kalakaua should be checked in his retrograde steps. He was a good enough King and all that, but he believed that modernity was not the right sort of medicine for his ailing people. He had visions of the grandeur of his predecessors, the good sovereigns of the islands who had held pagan beliefs and had prospered under them, and while he professed to be a Christian, he could not help feeling that the four gods, Lolo, Ku, Kanaloa and Kane had proved their worth during all those generations before Captain Cook came along in 1778 and being himself mistaken for Lolo, started the island on the downward path which eventually led to Scotch missionaries, Scotch whisky, Virginia cigarettes, beach-combers, American sewing-

Procession

machines, base-ball and draw poker. Incidentally His Majesty had occasion more than once in my hearing to declare vociferously that poker had been invented mainly to rouse his royal resentment.

I arrived in Honolulu in 1889 just before the successful curtailment of King Kalakaua's power and about a couple of years before the annexation and the deposition of his sister Queen Liliokalani. The town was then not quite so Americanised as it is now. The trans-Pacific steamers made occasional calls, but the professional *lei* mongers were absent from the pierhead, the *hula hula* was danced by the natives for fun and not for fifty cents, and that Portuguese infliction the "improved" ukulele, like Mr. Irving Berlin's rag-time, was apparently unborn; at least so far as I could observe.

But I met something more picturesque in the persons of Mr. Harry Gillig and Mr. Frank Unger, two shining lights of the San Francisco Bohemian Club. Mr. Gillig was a rich descendant of the '49 millionaire pioneers of the Golden Gate, and Mr. Unger, the father of Miss Gladys Unger, the playwright, so well known to Londoners of a decade ago, was a sort of private secretary and European coach to His Majesty, to whom I was presented at the palace at nine o'clock in the morning for an interview for publication, and incidentally as a fourth in the matutinal game of poker. It seems that Kalakaua drew every morning from the royal treasury the tidy sum of one hundred dollars. So far as I could gather from a cursory and fleeting visit the royal luck was very bad, merely because the royal player had a habit of bluffing terribly; and his two opponents had learned his tricks which he seldom varied—

Five Kings Opposite

except in my case. The game lasted about an hour and a half. The King's attention was throughout concentrated on his cards, and he never took his eyes off them, and all the time he talked to himself in that soft, low, musical tone which is so attractive in the natives of the Sandwich Islands. We caught him once or twice in a gigantic bluff and then he said smilingly: "Now, I've got you all. You can't beat me." And he began to raise his betting, leaving me as his only opponent. "I warn you," he said, "I've got four kings," which convinced me more and more that he was the king of bluffers. Finally, as all things have to come to an end, I thought it best to call and so save him a little money. Sure enough, Kalakaua put down four kings.

"I told you so," he said, "and this is the first time in your life that you have been confronted with five kings; one alive and four in his hand!"

Poor old Kalakaua. He told me of the island town where you could go for sanctuary in the old days; of the infant sacrifices which, believe it or not, had the effect of keeping off pestilence and war; of the days before the Americans came, when you could sleep safely in the high-ways. He had started as a pro-American; was in fact put on the throne against Queen Emma who was pro-British, but he changed his tactics after a visit abroad and came back imbued with the spirit of his ancestors. The most important statement he had to make to me was this:

"If you are a native, no matter whether you are civilised or not, stick to your own kind. Never try to be what you are not. Our people have tried to be French and Portuguese and British and American. Look at them. They are still Kanakas."



THIRTY

The Commodore

My first real newspaper tyrant was the famous James Gordon Bennett, the second. If he had not been born to wealth and luxury and had taken up working journalism, he would easily have become as great if not greater than he was. He had a real genius for the sort of journalism which his father had founded. He was inquisitive, catty, human, eccentric, generous and penurious in turn, kindly and inexpressibly brutal from moment to moment, broad-minded, well-read and suspicious. These are among the qualities that fit a man for journalism—a calling which exacts every human attribute and every human as well as inhuman emotion from those who make it their life work; and James Gordon Bennett was thus well endowed.

I could not possibly count on my fingers the number of times that in the course of my ten years on the *New York Herald*, I sat down to curse the day I met this impossible person. I shudder to recall the maledictions I have pronounced on him at close range (out of his hearing, of course, he being my employer) or at a distance thousands upon thousands of miles away, owing to some unnecessary and unjust proprietorial imposition which had come to me unexpectedly by messenger or by cablegram. On the other hand I hasten to add that I recall with pleasure the many occasions on which I have had cause to give thanks for my

Procession

tutelage under this difficult, importunate but extremely capable and wise journalist. Over and over again in the course of half a century I have had what I call "the Bennett way" to lead me right; for he was not only an astute judge of world affairs but he was also a consummate artist in the matter of giving your public exactly the right "mixture of atmosphere" in headlines, type and introduction.

Bennett was an absentee editor. That is, he edited the great *New York Herald* by cable from his house in Paris or his yacht in the Mediterranean, like Scripps of the evening papers and Pulitzer of the *World*. Palatial yachts seemed at one time to afford added vigour to proprietorial edicts, principally, I presume, because their inaccessibility made it impossible or difficult for subordinates to intervene and offer counter-suggestions.

From time to time, months and sometimes years apart, Mr. Bennett, popularly called "the Commodore" (he had once been Commodore of the New York Yacht Club) turned up unexpectedly in his native city. Then for two or three days of his stay he would completely and hopelessly disorganise the establishment, and be off again leaving behind a wailing staff, with Broadway strewn, metaphorically speaking, with the bodies of decapitated editors, managers, and reporters. It was on one of these cyclonic inbursts that I came face to face with this Scottish-American Newspaper Nabob. I was a very young reporter, utterly alone and unknown in New York, trying to find not only my career, but enough to pay for at least one meal a day; and sometimes even that did not happen. While walking along in a then up-town street in an endeavour to keep myself

The Commodore

from thinking about the luncheon I had not succeeded in earning, I ran across a fire in a convent. It presented many interesting features that could be turned into a word-picture—nuns running along a wall, wailing; leading girls trying to help them over to safety and all that, including the usual heroics of bystanders until the firemen arrived. So I staked my last few coppers, went into a beer saloon, wrote a good column of real heart-string-pulling "sob-stuff" the like of which is so common now, but was unknown then, walked all the way three miles down-town to Mr. Albert Pulitzer's *Journal*, the precursor of to-day's *American*, sold it then and there for five whole dollars, got at the same time a permanent reporter's job on the strength of the "story," and went out to spend all my newly acquired wealth on the first genuine honest-to-God dinner for a month!

Now here is another of those strange Life-story twists which one hears of so often. I had for some weeks presented myself every day at the reporters' room of the *Herald* asking for a post. Every day I was turned away. They would not even see me. Finally on that day of the convent fire, the City Editor himself, Mr. Meighan, came to the gate and said, "If you come here again after having been told so many times that there is nothing for you, I will have you put out. Put out. See?"

The next morning the Commodore turned up at Sandy Hook in *La Normandie* of the French Line. There was a fog and the ship was held up at quarantine. The morning papers were brought on board, and the Commodore, deigning to read the *Journal*, saw my tear-stained report of the convent fire. He declared it to be a "masterpiece of

Procession

reporting " as he often said afterwards; and being a man who knew what he wanted, demanded that I should be found and at once put on as a descriptive reporter on the *Herald*. No one knew me. The office, of course, did not, and how could Mr. Meighan who had just " put me out " connect me with that style of new reporting? So they put out " feelers " for me. In due course, after I had been a couple of days at the *Journal* office, someone came along and said, " Do you know that the *Herald* is looking for you? Wants to engage you, etc.?"

I was young but sophisticated and I retorted in terms which would nowadays be expressed as " Oh yeah?" I did not go. More people came to tell me about what I thought was a hoax, and meanwhile at the *Herald* office sat the Commodore sizzling with anger because a miserable, nameless reporter was laughing at him; for my " Oh yeah?" responses had been duly reported to him by the sycophants that always encumber the feet of a throne.

In the end I went. There in the *Herald* office at Broadway and Ann Street I was brought before a Louis Quinze desk where sat a tall, grey-eyed, loosely dressed man with " action " expressed all over him. He stood up, looking even taller than he was.

" What do you mean by not coming here when I send for you? "

That is how the Great Mogul must have talked, or Genghis Khan, or Attila.

I will not record the conversation. It is sufficient to say that I was sent up to Mr. Meighan with a chit to the effect that I was to be put on " specials "; that I was to have a salary beyond my most exalted dreams and that I

The Commodore

was to write direct to the Commodore once a week. The latter was his happy way of creating discord in the staff. Mr. Meighan's expression on my appearance was better than anything in a Chinese comedy where facial contortion is measured by the twists and turns of eyes and mouth. He never openly resented my coming to him in that way, and he was most grateful later on when I came to authority and recommended him for a well-earned pension.

I spent many pleasant and many unpleasant and difficult hours with the Commodore in all sorts of places, and I left him "for good" on board his yacht *Namouna* at Venice one fine morning when I arrived from one of those futile voyages from New York to talk about everything and nothing. She was a fine yacht with a crew of sixty, and when I came alongside I found them all clean shaven, from Captain Hutt downward. Hutt had once a fine sailorman's Captain Cuttle beard. The Commodore, too, had sacrificed his beard. So had several of his guests by his direction. I owned a fine, flowing, silky moustache, such as people cultivated in the 'nineties. I kept mine, but the *Herald* saw me no more.

For some years in London there was between us what the comedians call "loud silence." Then, during one of the Balkan wars I got one of my war correspondents to hand over copies of his despatches to the *New York Herald*. It was merely one of those spontaneous things which one does for one's people—and the *Herald* were after all my people. The act touched the old Commodore beyond words and he never forgot it.



THIRTY-ONE

Díaz, the Dictator

ONE of the inevitable Adams family of Boston, Mass.—the Adams clan have had a thumb in every pie for generations—was the president of the railway that first ran a train from the North into Mexico City, over hill and down dale, across silver-mines still undug and vast oil-fields waiting to be tapped. Actually the train left the Adams jurisdiction after crossing the frontier. Then it came under the ægis of the Mexican Central Railway—in other words, Señor Porfirio Díaz, Dictator.

On the New Mexico side of the frontier the line was known as the Kansas Pacific. I think—I am probably wrong, for I have no data by me—that it is now the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé railway, which takes you on one of its branches to the fairyland of the Grand Canyon with its many-hued cathedral-like rocks, its vision cities, its unbelievable gorges. Also, incidentally, this astonishing railway with its luxury train called "The Chief," carries you into Los Angeles, next door to Hollywood. But at the time of which I speak, Los Angeles was a little hold-over townlet of New Spain and there was no Hollywood. The most important place in that section was Pasadena, hallowed by the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson, who "stopped over" there for a spell, and also since made world-famous by its Huntington museum which

Procession

harbours Reynolds' "Blue Boy" and Sir Thomas Lawrence's "Pixie."

The particular section of the Santa Fé line that I wish to speak of made connection with the Mexican line at a place called Deming, which was populated more or less by gamblers and prairie dogs. Nowadays one goes across farther down by the Southern Pacific to El Paso on the Rio Grande border.

The Mexican Central took over the elegant Boston party of which I was a humble member in the capacity of a newspaper correspondent. I was little prepared for the revelation that was forthcoming in the City of Mexico, far down in the interior of the mysterious and romantic country of Montezuma. There, hundreds of miles away, we found a great and bustling city of half a million people, a city rich in stone palaces, splendid public and private edifices, boulevards, squares, opera-houses, theatres, a cathedral of ancient build and of great beauty, and a vast national palace in which the business of the Republic was conducted. But most interesting to me was the fact that in this spot once lived Montezuma, the famed Aztec Emperor, and later Hernando Cortez, the Spanish Viceroy of the sixteenth century.

Here, too, in this palace ruled Porfirio Diaz, President of Mexico by virtue of the overwhelming majority-votes of his countrymen. He had been President for years and he was to remain President for a good many years more. Anyone who had the temerity to oppose him received short shrift. Every great office in Mexico was in the President's hands—he was more powerful than Mussolini or Hitler—and the least disloyalty to his person, or even

Diaz, the Dictator

mild dissent on public grounds was swiftly crushed in the only way known to be effective. The firing squads were kept busy for many years after the execution at Querétaro of the Emperor Maximilian, the Austrian usurper.

I was driven out to the "castle" on Chapultepec Hill, the summer home of the President, which had been built by Maximilian during his few inglorious but hopeful years back in the 'sixties. Here I first met General Diaz. He was a swarthy, strongly-built man of some sixty years, with flashing black eyes and greying hair at temples, which was in striking contrast with the thick black of the rest of his head. It was a strong, merciless face which showed that there was no weakness to be expected anywhere and there were no smiles of welcome. He told me about Mexico and its incessant struggles for generations against public dishonesty, against poverty, against endless enemies; of his own efforts even back to the days when he was a student at the University of Oaxaca, farther down towards the isthmus; of his early enthusiasm for Juarez, whose pupil he was at college and later lieutenant in the great revolution; of how, after Juarez and he had recaptured Mexico from the French who had set up Maximilian, and after they had shot the Austrian, he had himself revolted and finally become President in 1877.

During all this recital the President sat at his desk stiffly. Only now and then he would lift a hand and stroke his moustache. If ever a man had perfect control over all his emotions it was this strange, attractive but awe-inspiring, immovable Indian with the cat-like swing of the eyes.

I attempted to induce General Diaz to speak about Maximilian; what was he like; how did the people accept

Procession

the Empire with its pomp and circumstance, and so on. But the stolid man would give little information. He said that Maximilian was never anything but a pawn in the French game. The people of Mexico had elected him Emperor by some sort of *hocus-pocus* plebiscite, and he came over in 1864 as the puppet of Napoleon III, little knowing what a mess of difficulty was in store for him. Actually, Señor Diaz thought he was a decent, well-meaning man of most liberal views who sympathised with the low condition of the ten million inhabitants of Mexico, most of whom were Indians and half-breeds, and nearly all on the last border-line of extreme poverty. But Maximilian failed to conciliate his opponents.

"I was inclined to sympathise with the man," said Diaz, "until he issued decrees which carried death sentences at the slightest provocation and for that, in the end, we executed him. I was always sorry about that. We gave him plenty of opportunity to go back whence he came. Indeed we made all sorts of offers for him to get out, but he was a proud man, too.

"His wife? Well, it was pretty hard luck to send that finely-nurtured lady into this country at that time. We were just then in a particularly desperate state of revolution. No place for a lady."

He told me that about 1866 Mr. James O'Kelly, who was then on the staff of the *New York Herald* as a war correspondent, and who in due course became an M.P. and Parnell's most faithful adherent, faithful, indeed, to the very end, had approached him in order to gain his interest in securing a free passage to Vera Cruz for the Empress Carlota, who was going to France to plead for further

Diaz, the Dictator

aid from Napoleon III. General Diaz, who was then commanding the rebellious Mexicans in the South, did not say whether his agreement was given or that he knew why the Empress was going, but I recall that many times in later years "Jim" O'Kelly, M.P., an old and broken warrior, used to sit in the smoking-room of the House of Commons reciting in modest terms his thrilling experiences as an escort to the Empress on her journey through hostile country to the port of embarkation.

Finally Diaz, assuming the rôle of prophet, said to me:

"The time will soon come when Mexico will be one of the greatest and richest nations in the world; for look: we have here everything that is necessary for such high realisations."

Well, man proposes, and so on. The years came and went, and with them came the ever-increasing prosperity of Mexico under the hard fist and the wise provisions of the Indian. But he was human; and being human he made mistakes, which caused him eventually to relax his grip on the derelict empire which he had turned into a Golconda. Then I met him again by accident a year or so before the War; in Paris, of all places; in the capital of the country whose chief had plotted against him nearly half a century ago. He was an old man now, an exile, and not in robust health. He had been turned out by Madero, who himself was turned out some time after this and executed by Huerta, and so on and on throughout the gamut of Mexican revolts. The old man was spared all this.

I recalled our conversation at the castle of Chapultepec

Procession

years ago. He remembered vaguely. I recalled his prophecy. Then the old warrior's eyes flashed, his hands gripped his stick and he said :

" True, every word was true. Mexico is a land of greatness. Its prosperity can never be killed by these newer revolutionaries. What Juarez started and I built must prevail. I wish I were young again . . . ! "

I felt that I could translate into words the look in the eyes of this ancient leader. They were probably these :

" If I were young again ! I would not lose a moment. I would rush back to my country and raise the flag of revolt. I would crush and crush and crush, for only in that way can power be made the companion of progress ! "

A strange faith which all these dictators are gradually learning to be fallacious. For progress, true progress, can never be built on injustice or force.

General Diaz died in Paris in 1915. His hard-won reforms had long since died and must now again be laboriously built up.



THIRTY-TWO

R. L. S.

I THINK I must have been one of the earliest of the hundreds of thousands of Stevenson "fans." Somewhere, somehow, in the early 'eighties I read a thrilling story called *The Sea Cook*. It was by Robert Louis Stevenson and later, under the new title of *Treasure Island*, it captured the imagination of the English-reading world. *The Sea Cook* represented to me the height of perfection in story-telling. I succumbed to its unsurpassed style and I have ever since been its devotee.

Later, about 1886, my young and impressionable soul was again thrilled by *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I was not alone. This young Edinburgh lawyer, writing with an inspiration that seemed uncanny, had suddenly become the most talked-of literary figure at a time when there were many literary giants.

I was sitting in the news-room of the *New York Herald* in New York. It was some time in the late summer of August 1887, just after I had returned from attending Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in London. I was, it appears, something of an office celebrity owing to the fact that, though I was so young, I had begun to mingle with the great people of the world on assignments which were usually entrusted to older and more experienced correspondents, and I regret to have to confess, since

Procession

voluntary confession adds to one's stature in the matter of self-esteem, that I thought no end of myself and my rather superficial achievements. My rapid advancement had been due more to good fortune than particular merit.

Half a dozen members of the staff were talking about the literature of the day; of Lafcadio Hearn, who was just coming along; of Frank Stockton; of James Lane Allen, the "Kentucky Cardinal" master-writer; and of Harold Frederic, who was living in London as a newspaper correspondent and was beginning to be talked of. I remember we discussed the compelling force of a new writer, hardly known to the world, namely young Rudyard Kipling, who in far-away India was showing us poor scribes how to tell a story in his *Plain Tales from the Hills*. I chimed in with flourishes on behalf of Robert Louis Stevenson. I declared boldly that he was the greatest writer since Cervantes. Here there broke in the sententious voice of Mr. Meighan, our immediate Editorial Chief, who said:

"You seem to be so much under the thralldom of this Scotch haggis-eater (Meighan was Irish and Catholic and a Fenian and he hated the Scotch) that the best thing you can do is to put in an hour or two with him. I see here by the Ship News reports that Mr. Stevenson is on board the National Steamship liner *Queen* which is due at the foot of Fourteenth Street at four o'clock this afternoon. Go down to the pier and eat porridge with your darling. Get a column of good descriptive. Find out how many suits of tweed underwear he's got on—I hear he's a regular Turkish bath on foot—and if you get on closer terms tell him for me that a Dublin University degree is worth fifty of his 'Auld Reekie.'" Meighan had good taste in literature

but he hated Scotland more than he did England, which is saying a good deal.

So I went down to the National Line pier and waited for R. L. S. The National Line was not much of a star line. It carried mostly goods and what we now call "Tourists." Being privileged I got on board early, and in the cubby-hole which they called the smoking-room I met my hero.

He looked tall and very thin and very sallow, unmistakably T.B.; unmistakably a lovable character; unmistakably a trifle bored with my statement that I was one of his ardent admirers. He had great, soft, dark and kindly eyes and he smiled indulgently, but presently he accidentally learned that I had written a certain Jubilee description that he had read, which was fortunate for me, and he at once altered his somewhat indulgent air and became helpful. He had been in America seven or eight years before, when he went across the continent in an emigrant train.

"I was poor then," he said, "and I could not afford luxuries."

I smiled at his conception of luxury. The *Queen* in which he crossed was certainly not a luxury liner. He had on a tweed fore-and-aft deer-stalker cap and his clothes were not made in Hanover Square nor in Princes Street, Edinburgh. He had with him his wife and her son, Lloyd Osborne, whom I met again recently in London, and I think there was, too, his mother, straight from Edinburgh.

The interview was not of much value to the public but it was of immense value to me. In fact, up there in that little cubby-hole on board the liner, Robert Louis Stevenson, the master, carefully and seriously put me, a disciple but a stranger, through a training lesson in narration.

Procession

"Never confuse your reader" was one of his admonitions. "Never take liberties with your reader's intelligence" was another. "Use one word instead of two or more if you can obtain the same effect," a third. "Never let your pen write anything without consideration. Think first, write afterwards. I used to write first and then think. Bad habit," and so on and on.

Finally, Mr. Stevenson said something which I have never forgotten. As we shook hands on the pier he remarked casually:

"I am sure you will agree with me that the mere desire to shine as a writer does not justify so many people in following a course which can in the end lead only to unhappiness. You have to have something to write about first; and when you have written it you must have moral courage enough to rewrite it if it does not satisfy you, or destroy it altogether. It is not so easy as people imagine. Myself, I frequently tear up what I have written, no matter how much, and then begin again."

As an Editor I have over and over again remembered what R. L. S. said to me so many years ago. How many hundreds of people have broken their hearts over their own inferior work! God makes writers just as he makes gardeners and wood-carvers.



THIRTY-THREE

The Diva

THERE has surely never been a greater operatic soprano than Adelina Patti unless it was her sister Carlotta, who was lame and had, therefore, to eschew the triumphs that she might otherwise have achieved. I knew her when she was in the heyday of her astonishing career, when it was the fashion to unharness her carriage horses, and well-dressed men and women, taking the place of the horses, drew the equipage triumphantly and enthusiastically through the streets. She was a good-looking, snappy-eyed little Italian who spoke English with a New York accent. She was then the wife of the Marquis de Caux, a gentleman who had been highly placed in the household of Napoleon III. This marriage had maintained itself for a long time, a dozen or fifteen years, and it came to an end about the time that I first met her. The Patti family, Carlotta, Adeline and the elder sister Amelia, had all lived in Twenty-third Street in New York, where later the great shops were situated. Amelia, the elder sister, was the wife of Maurice Strakosch, who had taught the Patti girls to sing and who brought out Adelina in her first concert in New York as far back as 1859. After the dissolution of the Caux marriage Patti took to herself Signor Nicolini, a famous tenor of the 'eighties, and this was quite a happy union ended only by the death of Nicolini in Wales, whither the two had

Procession

retired to a castle at Craig-y-Nos. At this secluded place they had built and privately operated a theatre to which Adelina Patti gave much loving care. Her house parties for these functions were delightful episodes.

Here, one day in the late autumn of 1890, I sat as a guest in the morning-room with Patti who was then still under fifty years of age, though she had already retired. With us was Marcus Mayer, her personal agent of a quarter of a century. Mayer had been, like Buffalo Bill, one of the early pony-express riders in the Far West, and his talk was florid and stimulating. Yet though he had been a pony-express rider, I do not remember ever having seen him out of evening dress or formal frock-coat attire, and never without the shiniest of top hats. And I now recall, in later years, just before the War, meeting him, still immaculate but very aged and infirm, creeping pitifully along to his rendezvous in the Adelphi to talk, if possible, about the old days when Adelina Patti was the most famous and the most popular woman in the world.

There we sat in the morning-room, and the Diva, as she was always called, gossiped like a market woman. She spoke vividly of the days in Twenty-third Street when the Patti girls and the Sothern boys and the Boucicault girls (all famous names then) used to forgather on Sunday afternoons at the Strakosch house and slide down the banisters! How the *beau-ideal* of her younger days was old Colonel Mapleson with the waxed moustaches, the impresario who for so many years had piloted her from triumph to triumph, from continent to continent, how her first great thrill was the response she got at Covent Garden after singing "Home Sweet Home" which she never failed

The Diva

to put forward as an encore after that. She spoke charmingly of most of her rivals, Pauline Lucca, for instance, but disparagingly of a new young singer who, she said, had only one note and that was a promissory one.

"I was in Denver once," she said, "and it was suggested to me that I might like to have a little chat with one of the great silver kings of the town. So I agreed, and between the acts there appeared a heavily built, forceful looking man with a big moustache and a kindly eye. He swung a great wide-awake hat in graceful greeting. His watch-chain was massive in proportion and his voice as soft as a dove's. We shook hands and he sat down on one of the chairs in rather a precarious fashion. Incidentally the opera-house in which I was singing belonged to him. He said:

" 'It is a great pleasure, marm, to see you here. If there is anything we can do for you while you are in Denver, let us know. I know your season is booked but if you'd like to come back here and settle for a spell I think we could arrange that.'

"I said I was greatly obliged but I was afraid my terms would be too high for what the Colonel called 'a spell.'

" 'Well, marm,' he said, 'how much for a couple of months, Sundays included?'

"I thought," said Patti, "that I would give him a shock; so I said, 'Well, Colonel, my manager would demand, say, about sixty thousand dollars.'

" 'Why sure,' he answered, and Patti imitated him to perfection. 'Why sure, and I'd throw a couple of thousand more for weight.' "

Procession

But she could not get to Denver after all. When Madame Patti told me that story I mused then at the enormous sums that this little coloratura singer could demand and receive. That was in 1890. She was the world's greatest singer and she was willing to go West for £100 a day.

Nowadays our little second-rate soubrettes turn up their pretty noses when they are offered £100 a day to go out West to Hollywood.



THIRTY-FOUR

Edward Grey

The Man of Dignity

It was on the Sunday morning in August 1914, the day preceding the declaration of war against Germany. Sundays in that critical period, and indeed, throughout the years of hostilities, were no different from other days, for we all had to stand by. I was walking along the Mall on my way to and through the Admiralty Arch. Just where the road debouches towards the Horse Guards Parade, opposite the German Embassy, I encountered Prince Lichnowsky the German Ambassador, on his way from an interview with Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary. The Prince walked slowly, head down, and so would have come into collision with me had I not hailed him. He was in the lowest depths of despair.

"I am afraid it is all up," he said. "We have done our best to avoid this dreadful calamity. Russia is at war with my country. Others must follow and I fear that Great Britain will take a hand."

I asked him what was the position with regard to France. Would Germany insist on violating Belgian neutrality in order to reach French territory quickly, and did his government really believe that Great Britain would stand aloof and not interfere?

Procession

Prince Lichnowsky shrugged his shoulders and walked away towards his Embassy which after August 4 he was never to occupy again.

I diverted my steps and headed towards the Foreign Office where, as a London editor, I had the entry. Providentially at the foot of the steps leading to Downing Street, I met Sir Edward Grey who was thenceforward destined to become the ogre of Teutonic Europe, the dreaded war monster, the eater of widows and little orphans. Sir Edward, afterwards Viscount Grey of Falloden, was never a radiant figure but there was an air about him of serenity and serious thought. To paraphrase Lowell "he had a natural, wise sincerity, a simple truthfulness; and these have lent him a dignity as moveless as the centre."

I began by saying that I had just left Prince Lichnowsky and that he was most unhappy and apprehensive.

"Yes," said the Foreign Secretary, "he has every reason to be so. Besides, his own position is really difficult, since the conduct of affairs in Berlin is now in the hands of the soldiers who pay no attention to their diplomats. . . ."

Then, to my surprise, Grey spoke, not about the coming, the inevitable war, but about Ireland. Up to that time, almost to that very hour, it was not certain whether Ulster would not rise in revolt. Ireland had loomed even larger in the storm-clouds than anything that caused disturbing thoughts abroad. He praised Carson, he praised James Craig, he praised everything Irish. Then reverting to the immediate more pressing situation, he said: "Make no mistake about it; if we are driven into war, and I can see no way out, no honourable way out for us—it will mean distress and disaster all round. No one can gain from it.

Edward Grey, the Man of Dignity

We have not yet made a move beyond placing the Navy where it should be, and mobilising the Army. The Expeditionary Force has received no orders, for we have been hoping to the last moment that there may yet be a way out."

He looked sad and worn. Never in all my years had I come face to face with Responsibility so weightily reposed in one figure. Here was the one man who had been fighting desperately, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day for weeks to avert the impending catastrophe; who would have given his life to end the crisis, and now for reward was to be seized on by the enemy as the cause of it all.

"They are taking on a grave responsibility," said the Minister. "Just think of those hordes of Russians ready to stream across Germany—millions and millions of them—irresistible, it seems to me."

There was even in that discerning, wise mind the picture of the all-crushing Russian steam-roller which was to do its works so ruthlessly without opposition! There was no anticipation of Tannenberg. We had never heard of Hindenburg. In fact few people in Germany for that matter had heard of Hindenburg, who in a short time seized that Russian steam-roller and threw it into the Masurian lakes.

"You will have a Press censorship," said Grey as we parted, "and you will not like it. I wouldn't like it either if I were an editor. I recall that when Theodore Roosevelt was here some years ago, and we went for a walk in the New Forest to hear the birds sing and to identify their various notes, we discussed the Press in wartime. Roosevelt said: 'I have an idea that the best Press censorship is a self-imposed one based on an editor's personal sense of

Procession

honour and loyalty. I would put each editor on his honour and leave it at that.'

"My retort to that," said Sir Edward, "was: 'That is a most beautiful and Utopian thought. But you must remember that war suspends the rule of moral obligation. I would put editors on their oath first and then put a censor over them to see that they observed the rule, for in war, particularly, things are vivid and liable to unwitting distortion.'

"To this Roosevelt answered: 'All right, have it your own way, but I want to see the censor who will stop me from saying what I want to say.'"

Here the sad face of Sir Edward Grey lighted up with a smile that for a moment hid the bitter thoughts within. And he passed on, a great, endearing figure of dignity and moral grandeur.



THIRTY-FIVE

The Father of Sherlock Holmes

SIR WALTER BESANT, who was responsible, with Rice, for *The Golden Butterfly*, one of the most delightful stories of the Victorian era, asked me to become a member of the newly formed Authors' Club which was about to occupy fine premises in Little St. James's Street. There was not much formality about it. Besant was head of the Committee and the Committee quite reasonably deferred to his excellent judgment; wherefore in about a week I became a member of the Authors' Club. That was, I should say, at a rough guess just about forty-three years ago.

The club inaugurated a most attractive programme of readings from original manuscripts by authors—unknown, aspiring and, in some cases, already famous.

The Committee in charge of this particular idea was captained by Frankfort Moore, who was himself a considerable author at that time. There, off St. James's Street one evening I heard a short story read by Dr. A. Conan Doyle, who was beginning to make himself famous with his fine, healthy fiction, and whose Sherlock Holmes was just about peeping over the wall. Conan Doyle was not generally known in person, but there were a good many authors and others present to hear the new celebrity read something of his own composition.

Procession

I have a vivid recollection of Doyle's appearance before that distinguished and critical gathering. He rose as if reluctant from his place at the dining-table far down at the end of the room. He was tall, angular, diffident, rather clumsily dressed in ill-fitting evening clothes. I judged him to be in the late thirties. Our surprise was greatest when he began to read nervously from his paper. His voice was husky. It had an unfamiliar intonation; sounded outlandish, like the talk of shepherds in Cumberland, or the local exchanges one hears in hill countries, Welsh for instance. Finally I fixed it as Northumbrian, all burrs and sing-song. I have since learned that it was a heritage from his Irish ancestry.

It was a short tale. Doyle was a physician and he was telling the story of a mother's death at childbirth and the father's waiting anxieties—a gloomy, harassing, unhappy tragedy of real life such as most physicians must experience more than once in the practice of their calling. There was nothing in the story or in its recital to give it the slightest claim to posterity, and I think the verdict of the audience, unanimously, was "Thumbs Down." Conan Doyle certainly gained no laurels that night. Incidentally I do not think the story was ever published.

Walter Besant introduced me to him after the fiasco and we walked out together into St. James's Street to Northumberland Avenue where I had my headquarters. He had sensed his failure of the evening and was correspondingly depressed.

We became friends and I came to know a man of the finest character and accomplishments. In the course of the years after he had become world-famous and rich, I never found him unwilling or unready to comply with a

The Father of Sherlock Holmes

request which required substantial proof of his good intentions. In other words, his purse and his pen were ever ready in the cause of charity.

It was not, however, until Conan Doyle took to Spiritualism that he showed, what his general demeanour indicated, the utmost determination and doggedness of action. People laughed at him. He shook his head. Many of his friends jeered and he smiled wanly in reply and went on with his séances. He was imposed on in a hundred ways. Sometimes he knew he was being used, but never did he waver from his determination to go on with his researches and his séances.

One day there appeared in the *Daily Express* an article about a dinner where wine was served and Conan Doyle spoke. The article was somewhat flippant and its heading was equally naughty: "Wine and Spirits." Doyle wrote me a fiery letter and threatened to "part brass rags" with me. I replied in all humility and apologised for a needless attempt at humour quite out of tune with my own sentiments. Doyle's reply was characteristic:

" WINDLESHAM,
" CROWBOROUGH,
" SUSSEX.
" July 1920.

" MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

" Pray forgive my hasty letter. I am half Irish you know and my British half has the devil of a job to hold the hot-headed rascal in.

" But believe me it was not personal. I am pachydermatous. But the cause is very sacred to me. ' Wine

Procession

and Spirits' was to me like 'Holy Wafers and Penny Buns' to a Catholic. And so cheap. But all reasonable criticism I love and find beneficial.

"It's 'as you were' with the old paper and me.

"Yours very sincerely,

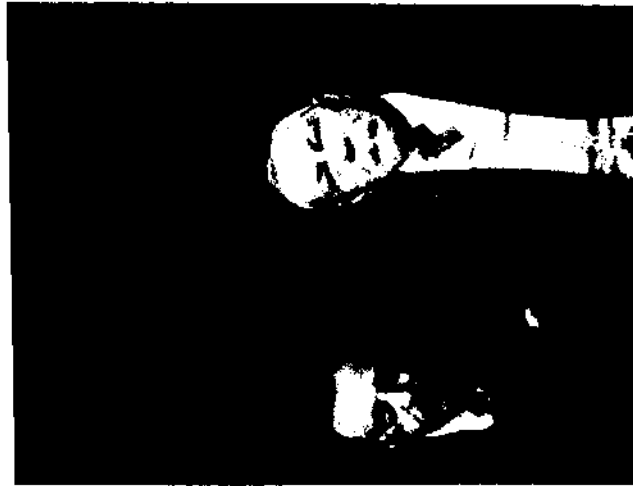
"A. CONAN DOYLE."

He came up to see me a day or two later and said:

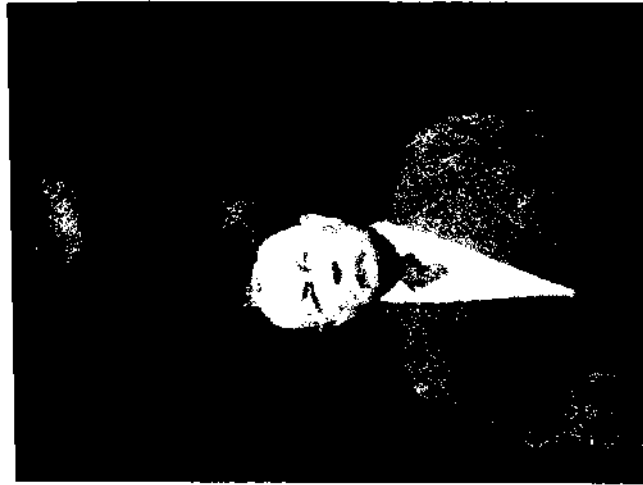
"You have never yet given me cause to think that you regard me either as a charlatan, a fool, a lunatic or a child, though your paper has frequently gone out of its way to make implications in each of these senses in turn. I have always felt that you have personally had no hand in it and that if you had been in London at any of these times you would have given me the fair play which I expect from a friend."

I assured him that, as most people know, it is difficult for an editor to sit successfully on the little Imp that infests all newspaper offices for the purpose of creating wrong impressions, causing misunderstandings and upsetting friendships. Particularly, I said, is this the case where one's own friends are concerned. The little Imp steps in somehow and makes mischief.

"I may give an order," I said, "that on no account shall there be any further reference to, say, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Spirit Séances. Right. The order is strictly and honourably obeyed throughout the office. The organisation works with clockwork precision, and for, say six months, Conan Doyle, whether for or against, gets not a line, not a sentence, not a syllable, not a comma of criticism



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the author sitting to a medium in Smith Square for a hoped-for "spirit" photograph. No spirit appeared.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with the ectoplasm rays over him. He wrote about this picture : "I hope it is a halo and not a noose which hangs above me."

The Father of Sherlock Holmes

in print, though all sorts of things of interest or no interest in connection with Conan Doyle have occurred. Then one evening the night editor is off duty, ill, or on holiday, or at a midnight party, and his assistant takes his place. At the same time there has been a new chief sub-editor, and three or four or five new sub-editors have come to the sub's desk and they are unfamiliar with the Conan Doyle embargo. To show the perfection to which the Imp of Mischief has brought his machine, he has also contrived to put in a new or substitute chief proof-reader and to cap it all the editor is not there at all that night, being busily engaged in consorting with statesmen or near-statesmen in planning the regeneration of the world. So the Imp has it his way, and in goes a nice little paragraph innocent enough and interesting enough, but barbed as well, to cause Conan Doyle considerable misgivings. The next day the Prohibition order is polished up and circulated again all round, new-comers and all, only to be 'jumped' the next time the Imp finds a favourable opportunity."

It was a long explanation to make but it was satisfactory to my friend. I repeat it here for the benefit of the general public in defence of newspaper editors, who are usually held to be personally responsible for every slip, great or small, which happens not to please. It should be remembered always that a daily newspaper, no matter how exiguous its composition, how extremely careful its editors may be, is but the result of necessarily hurried human effort, and perfection can never be reached.

It was at about this time that Conan Doyle became intensely interested in the discovery of real fairies by two girls in Yorkshire. Two little girls were taking photographs,

Procession

just simple, cheap little camera photographs. When the films were developed there appeared on them a group of fascinating dancing fairies of the story-book type. Doyle went down and investigated. More, he employed honest people to go fully into the mystery. He wrote to me from Crowborough in September of 1920:

"In spite of all criticism there is no flaw at all in the evidence and the episode will prove to be the start of a new era.

"The two little girls are absolutely honest. I enclose a letter from one of them and as a judge of human nature you will *feel* honesty in it.

"I have had some fresh fairy photos sent in (from Glasgow of all places). I have, however, to be very wary and get the best expert advice before I venture to pronounce on such things. I have never yet been convicted of a mistake nor can I afford to be. All hoaxes have miscarried."

He wrote a book on *The Coming of the Fairies*, but unfortunately for us they have never come nearer South than Yorkshire. Doyle went on experimenting with photographs. He told me that he had discovered someone who sat over his shoulder in nearly every picture that was taken of him by a medium photographer. He gave me names of people whose faces appeared above his head. I regret I cannot remember their names!

One day Sir Arthur asked me to go with him to the medium to be photographed together and see who and what would share the plate with us. We went to a house near Smith Square, in Westminster. It has now disappeared

The Father of Sherlock Holmes

in the general reconstruction and furbishing-up of that old Queen Anne district which was once the favourite resort of smugglers and criminals. Now it is the fashionable town-dwelling resort of Members of Parliament. I think the house was at the corner of Gayfere Street—an old, rickety, grey relic of evil days.

An elderly woman, the medium, Mrs. Deane, admitted us. She was bent and grey like the house. There were a few simply furnished rooms. One of them was fitted as a photographic dark room. I had provided myself with personally purchased plates. I got them in Victoria Street and marked them. We put the plates in the camera and saw that the apparatus left no room for chicanery. Then Mrs. Deane posed us and I saw that there was no chance for an outside person to come between us and the screen behind. Mrs. Deane took three exposures, one of Doyle and myself, and one of each singly. We dawdled about the place for an hour, saw the plates washed and developed. There was something behind Doyle's head—indistinguishable from a smudge and some indefinable marks on the plate on which we were together. Mrs. Deane said these marks would be more distinct on printing.

We stayed on for a while and then went off to lunch. Some days later Sir Arthur sent me three proofs. The double photograph showed between us what was said to be ectoplasm. To me it was like a cloudy smudge.

On the photograph of Conan Doyle there was behind him a greyish crescent which appeared to be emitting rays. Doyle told me later that in his view it had been a most unsatisfactory séance. In his covering note he said:

Procession

"Behold the photo! I hope it is a halo and not a noose which hangs over me.

"Should I ever write an article on Mrs. Deane's mediumship may I say that you saw fair upon this occasion?"

"Yours,

"A. C. D."

I like to think of this big, burly boy with the inquiring mind, the belief in fairies; the never-tiring searcher and the story-teller. He was a good friend and a fine fighter for right.



THIRTY-SIX

Whistler and Sargent

It was Sargent, the painter, who was looked upon a generation ago as the prototype of Velasquez, but is now scarcely known to the new generation, who introduced me to James Abbott McNeill Whistler, painter, etcher, lithographer, prose-poet and controversialist, the "Jimmy" Whistler who ruffled the Royal Academy for years and who had more clever and insulting phrases at his command than anyone since Samuel Johnson.

I do not think Sargent entirely approved of Whistler. I am not sure that they were good friends, but, of course, they knew one another well, and both lived at one time or another in Tite Street, Chelsea, which is not a long street. Besides they were both Americans. That is, they were born as American citizens, but both were Europeans in habit, in manner of speech and in outlook; for neither had lived long in the United States. Indeed Sargent was born in Italy while his parents were travelling abroad, and Whistler always resented any reference either to his place of birth or for that matter to his age.

Whistler ventured forth from Massachusetts at the age of seventeen to become a military cadet at West Point. Those who knew him at any time, in youth and in maturity, could well understand how it was impossible for this impatient, temperamental, undisciplined cub to fit himself

Procession

into military harness, to obey at the word of command, to be prompt and, above all, to maintain a firm check on his tongue in instances where injustice was apparent. So he left the adopted land of his father, who was an Irishman, came to London and then went to Paris to become a much derided, much discussed and finally much lauded world-famous artist.

This Whistler to whom I was introduced by John Sargent would now be a hundred years old; old enough to be looked upon by those of us who live to-day as a great master of the past, if not, indeed, a past master. It was some time in the late 'nineties, so then he must have been in the neighbourhood of sixty-five or six. Sargent and I were turning out of Tite Street into the Queen's Road, which in those days was picturesque with tumble-down Queen Anne houses. Across the narrow street stood a man waving an umbrella. He had on a tight-fitting frock-coat, shepherd's plaid trousers, a wavy, artistic neck-cloth and a top hat with a pronounced flat brim such as the *boulevardiers* of the time affected in Paris, quite in contradistinction to the top hats worn by London dandies, whose head-gear was not fashionable unless there was a vigorous curve to the rim, the more accentuated the more fashionable. Whistler, for it was the famous "Jimmy," waved his umbrella and cried out:

"Hi there, Sargent! Going to the Six Bells for your usual beefsteak and quart of ale?"

Sargent, the most dignified man I have ever known, tall, aristocratic, bearded like a Senator, firm-faced, grey-eyed, smiled indulgently and said:

"You've guessed it. Come and join us."

Whistler and Sargent

It was Sargent's habit daily at luncheon time to go to the then great artists' rendezvous in the King's Road or to the Chelsea Arts Club to have his never-failing beef-steak and his pot of beer, to be followed by a whacking cigar. Usually he drove the short mile in a four-wheeler and returned the same way, for he seldom took exercise in spite of the enormous midday meal.

Whistler, on the other hand, was always on his feet. His was a busy, nervous, volatile, never-ceasing staccato personality. He joined us in the walk to the Six Bells and then there followed a conversation, in which I did not participate except as a listener, which was as entrancing as it was instructive. Whistler talked and he caused Sargent to talk a little, and that was an achievement.

"Now," said Whistler, "now that you are a Royal Academician do you think yourself honoured any more than if you had a picture accepted at the *Salon des Refusées* where I used to scintillate so magnificently? Of course not, and what do you have to say to those wild men, the critics, who say that you are the reincarnation of Velasquez or Franz Hals? You know you are not. Did Carolus Duran, who taught you everything you know, ever hold out any such hope to you? Of course not. I'll tell you what you are, Sargent. You are a great man; a greater man than you are a great painter. You couldn't help painting old Wertheimer the way you did, dog and all, including cigar, if you weren't a great man; but that is because you are a great showman, more a showman than a creative artist."

The portrait of Ascher Wertheimer, the great art dealer of Bond Street, was one of the sensations of the 'nineties.

Procession

Sargent, smiling patiently, interrupted here and there in an attempt to divert the conversation, but the flow went on.

"You are like old Fred Leighton. Ten years ago the whole badly dressed, badly expressed English crew of amateurs and connoisseurs who know so little of art that they cannot even drape their own angular figures with artistic perception, were acclaiming poor old Sir Frederick Leighton, who was like Alma Tadema, all marble and cold heart and Biblical misquotation. Where is old Leighton now? Hanging up in out-of-the-way museums to be looked at by people who will no more be able to decipher their meaning than you are able to translate the legend on an Alaska totem-pole.

"No, my friend, you have your vogue just now but you are going to have your inevitable eclipse. Let's wait twenty years, thirty years, fifty years and see what happens to both of us. As for myself, I am quite certain that I shall outlive you, for the reason that I have struck out on a line of my own. It isn't everyone who can follow me in lithography and etching. It isn't given to anyone else to say that he has discovered an analogy between painting and music. I've done that. They used to laugh at my tone values, my symphonies and harmonies in paint. Look at them now! All doing it. As for yourself, Sargent, your only hope in posterity lies in Wertheimer's dog and cigar, or Carmencita's big red rose in her hair—a master touch, that!"

We walked on past the lovely old houses in Cheyne Walk and Whistler pointed at the former house of Gabriel Dante Rossetti.

Whistler and Sargent

"What's to become of all that pre-Raphaelite crew, the Rossettis and Burne-Joneses and so on. These people are having a terrific run for their money just now. Terribly popular; all honey and bourgeois sentiment, but believe me they are destined for a hanging, a permanent hanging, out of the way, and a hundred years from now they will be still there and that is all. Beware of such a fate, Sargent. Do something unusual. Make them talk. Art is a great gift but you must do something to let people know that it is art."

So then at the corner of Oakley Street, "Jimmy" Whistler stopped, shook hands genially, and said he had to go on down the road to look at the brass door of his old Embankment studio. Sargent and I walked on. He said he was sure that Whistler was right as to the future of the pre-Raphaelites as well as of his own reputation, but he was not interested in those speculations.

"What I am just now interested in more than anything else," he said, "is my luncheon. I have had a heavy morning with a sitter who would talk all the time. Immediately after luncheon I shall have to put in two more hours with the most loquacious, the most voluble, the most rattle-trap sitter that ever sat; so you will understand that I shall need my luncheon to bolster me up."

We talked a few minutes outside the Arts Club to which he went after all. I did not join him at luncheon. I remember asking him what he thought of the report in that day's papers about a great international art exhibition to be held at the Royal Academy—a sort of precursor to the various interesting shows of the kind that have since been held here—French, Italian, Dutch.

Procession

"I don't know. I have not heard," said Sargent.
"What paper did you say it was in?"

"All the papers," I answered.

"Well you see," he said, "I never see the papers. I get all my news from my sitters, and they are usually badly informed."

I have often cast back my mind's eye on that little walk from Tite Street to the Club with two of the greatest painters of the century; of Whistler's predictions as to Sargent, more or less come true, and of Sargent's gorgeous indifference to world opinion or world affairs; of the man who could paint masterpieces and eat beefsteaks, drink beer and smoke huge cigars all mixed up together.



THIRTY-SEVEN

The Great Frenchman

HILAIRE DEGAS, the French painter whose true greatness became apparent mainly after his death, had a brother who was a journalist. I think his name was René. He was the proud possessor of the title of *Secrétaire de Rédaction* of the *Petit Parisien* in Paris; which, translated into English, meant Chief Sub-Editor. He had also been London correspondent of that interesting French daily. But many years before, René—or was he called Alphonse?—had been a cotton merchant's agent in New Orleans, and there I first met him in the midst of a yellow fever epidemic into which I had been sent as a special correspondent. There had been some looting along the levée and a corps of *vigilantes* had been hastily organised and armed to protect property; and among these *vigilantes*, proudly carrying a rifle, I encountered young Monsieur Degas, cotton merchant's agent, fresh from Paris and most energetic.

Years later there came nightly to my office in London the same Monsieur Degas, now a sort of journalist, in quest of proofs for his Paris paper, and frequently he would come into my room, spread out his arms, whirl them about and say, with little variation in the text:

"Ah, good evening, *cher maître*. Eet ees here not like New Orleans with zat wicked fever and ze wicked lootairs, hein? Long ago, hein? Ce soir, pas de nouvelles? I yave always delight to speak wiz you."

Procession

Then he would bow himself out, and he did that until through some sort of Paris influence he was transferred to the sinecure job at headquarters. He never spoke of his painter brother, and I learned afterwards that the family "thought nought of" Hilaire, who was a night-life Bohemian, who sketched ballet girls and café loungers; that he was a prototype of England's George Morland. Old René never dreamed of the fortune which the despised Hilaire, the genius, had amassed; a fortune comprising many fifty and one hundred and one thousand franc notes stuffed away haphazard in books, in portfolios, under pillows, in drawers, anywhere.

When Hilaire died all this fabulous wealth, hundreds of thousands of francs, came pouring like an avalanche on the surprised shoulders of brother René, who at once blossomed out under the benign influence of this life-giving fortune.

Unfortunately, after René and his family had become used to being plutocrats, and prices of the remaining Degas sketches and etchings had run into millions more, it was discovered that there were some other Degas descendants more entitled to the fortune; and so all this Monte Cristo wealth had to be passed back again, leaving poor old René Degas no other choice than to go back to his table desk off the Boulevard des Italiens and resume his job as *Secrétaire de Rédaction*.

This is a little life romance which I have had to put in here at the beginning of this sketch because there is no other place for it. I had to introduce my readers to the *Secrétaire de Rédaction* in order to present a more vivid character. None other than Georges Clémenceau, the man who more than anyone contributed to the successful ending

The Great Frenchman

of the War, who shared with Lloyd George the credit for bringing about unified command and in a thousand ways, in defiance of all the rules that govern old age, maintained a youthful and daring spirit throughout his stricken country.

It was some years before the War—six or seven—when one day while walking near the Madeleine, I met Monsieur Degas on the way to his office. We talked, naturally, about New Orleans and he walked with me towards the Champs Elysées. In a couple of minutes we encountered the man who for years had made it a hobby to bring down governments, and who was himself just then President of the Council, otherwise Prime Minister, himself on the edge of the political precipice. He was stumping along, planting his stick forcibly on the pavement, and he seemed to be talking to himself. The inevitable detective dogged his steps two or three yards behind. Degas shouted:

“Alloa, Monsieur le Président!”

Clémenceau looked up. His forceful, grim face lighted up in a lovely smile.

“Ah, Degas mon cher, comment allez vous?”

Introductions. Degas said proudly:

“An old New Orleans colleague, now the Editor of the *Daily Express* in London.”

“What! You are that reactionary?” shouted Monsieur Clémenceau. “You are the man who used to compare me with all the *sans-culottes* and with Juarez. So you, too, were in New Orleans! I now remember our former talk about America.”

Then he stepped in between us and said:

“Whither?”

Procession

I said I was off to call on my former chief, James Gordon Bennett, of the *New York Herald*.

"Let's all go," he said. "I've got an hour. Degas, in spite of his paper, has all day. I like Gordon Bennett. He is so intensely and yet so unwillingly American. I knew his father, too, when I went to America in the 'sixties. I went there because I wanted to live a free life. You see I was more than a left-wing Radical. I was almost impossible. I was John Stuart Mill incarnate. And what do you think happened to me? I wanted work badly, for I had only a small allowance from home, so I went to the *New York Herald* and asked for a job as a translator. I saw Mr. Bennett—this one, now living here in Paris—who was just taking over the control from his father, the founder of the paper. Both father and son were in the room and after a while the old man said to me:

"'You don't look like a man who can carry on the difficult struggle here without much effect on your sensitiveness. You would appear to me to be better fitted to teach young ladies in a seminary, rather than to compete with these hard-fisted chaps here.' — Said this to me, to me, Georges Clémenceau, me the querulous, the vindictive, whom my enemies call 'The Tiger'; said that to me!

"And now here's the joke. It actually happened that after a little while I got a job—where do you think? In a girls' college at Stamford in Connecticut, where I stayed over two of my three years in America and had a most comfortable and profitable existence, and where incidentally I forgot all the medicine I ever learned. Didn't know I had studied medicine? Yes, I did. I often wish I had kept it

The Great Frenchman

up. What a lot of turmoil I would have avoided . . ." and so on.

We eventually reached Mr. Bennett's house. He was away. Degas took a cab; very late, he was. Clémenceau and his watch-dog took another. We shook hands. . . .

The War years came. Old Georges, going on for eighty, did wonders, as we all know.

I went in 1916 to France at the invitation of the French Government to pay a visit to the line along the Argonne Forest towards Verdun. I had to call on the Chief Censor in Paris before receiving my final pass, to which was attached a most amiable and efficient guide in the form of a major on the General Staff. On the way in I met Senator Clémenceau. He knew me at once; or at least said he did, though I imagine he had got the information that I was outside from the Censor, whom he was visiting when my card was taken in.

"Ah," he said, "my old *New York Herald* colleague. New Orleans! Stamford! Do you remember?"

Then the wonderful old man stood for ten minutes outside the door—we were alone—telling me what he had in mind even then for the unified command which he did not succeed in bringing about until more than a year afterwards.

"We must win the War *now*," he said. "We cannot wait until the Americans come in and are strong enough to do it all themselves. The willing horse cannot stand the burden. If I had my way I would burn all these old women who masquerade as war experts."

Then he shook hands, stumped down the path, turned round and waved and was off.



THIRTY-EIGHT

The Napoleonic Touch

PEOPLE who knew Napoleon Bonaparte well always said that one of his most marked characteristics was that of lolling luxuriously in an arm-chair. He would fling himself almost with violence into a large chair and at once assume an air of ease and comfort unexpectedly different from the exhibition of fierce activity which he had displayed only a few seconds before.

That, too, was one of the characteristics of the late Viscount Northcliffe. Whenever I think of him I have in my mind the picture of a corpulent, loosely-dressed man, humped up purringly in an arm-chair. You could even tell his moods from the manner in which he rolled himself up or stretched himself out. If he was pleased he lay as prone and flat as the chair would permit; if he was arguing he sat up as if ready to spring; which he frequently did.

Northcliffe was a Napoleon "fan." We of the old *Daily Mail* days—I am now writing of the era when the world was young and the skies were azure—we all felt that Northcliffe, who was then plain Alfred Harmsworth, believed himself to be the reincarnation of the little Corsican adventurer. I was aware of this Napoleon complex long before I joined the *Daily Mail* just after the days when *Answers* had been Harmsworth's most powerful weapon of publicity. Julian Ralph, one of the most picturesque

Procession

and graphic of war correspondents, said to me one day: "I have been talking to young Alfred Harmsworth, a most remarkable personality who is bound to do big things, if for no other reason than that he probably believes that he is Napoleon come back to life. The next time you talk to him, try and remember this and see if you cannot pick out all the little Napoleonic gestures and peculiarities."

I followed Julian Ralph's suggestion and from that time onward to the end of Lord Northcliffe's shimmering career, it was impossible for me to dissociate him from Napoleon. He accentuated the wisp of hair over his forehead; he gesticulated just as Marshal Bertrand described Napoleon's gesticulations; he barked out quick commands to sub-editors and chauffeurs alike, just as no doubt the little Corsican barked to his marshals and his guard sergeants. I noticed a distinct preference for busts of Napoleon which you could see in almost any room that Harmsworth occupied. Finally, as the years passed on and he became a peer, he sent me one day a note signed "N" which was, of course, also the Napoleonic cipher.

This regal-looking "N" completed the illusion. I was mischievous enough once in chatting with him to say that I presumed he had chosen Northcliffe for his titular name in preference to the obvious and more widely known Harmsworth, merely to be able to use the Napoleonic "N" in his future correspondence. Knowing his predilection for publicity in all its phases—though at first he sought none personally—I could only attribute his choice to the greater claim on his imagination. He had a sense of humour which was generally under control. He did not check it this time, for he laughed and said:

The Napoleonic Touch

'No. You are wrong. I wanted very much to call myself Lord Harmsworth—not as you would suggest for the purpose of advertising my publications, but simply on account of a pardonable family pride. The authorities who distil red blood into blue in the Privy Council or the Lord Chamberlain's office or wherever they do their distilling, would not permit me to use the name of Harmsworth, for the reason which you mention—advertising—and so I had to fall back on the usual territorial descriptive title taken from the sea-coast close to my home at Elmwood in Kent."

Also, according to Hamilton Fyfe's *Life of Northcliffe*, he said: "It will be a relief to have a name without an 'h' in it. I was so tired of being called Mr. 'Armsworth by one of my most capable secretaries that I felt it quite a relief when he had to call me Sir H'Alfred (in 1906 when he was made a baronet). Now I'm glad to be rid of that too."

Northcliffe returned late in 1917 from the United States, where he had conducted a war mission. He was enthusiastic on the subject of American war preparation. He was out of touch with the home government, bitterly critical in the columns of all his papers, hopelessly at variance with Lloyd George on nearly all points. He refused to join the Cabinet, feeling that he could do better with a free hand outside. He installed himself at Crewe House in Curzon Street and began to lay the foundations for his propaganda in enemy countries, his "Mass Suggestion Paper-Poison-gas," which was worked with demoniacal fury and ingenuity. I called there at his request one day for the purpose of maintaining the contact which he considered so necessary between heads of departments and editors. Also he appeared to

Procession

be anxious to impress on me the fact that he was now a far more powerful and worth-knowing personage than he had ever been.

In the outer room at Crewe House sat a good-looking young man in the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel, a sort of Cerberus to the "old man." He was Sir Campbell Stuart, quiet, urbane, efficient and tactful. There was a crowd of people of all ranks waiting to be received or rejected. The majority went off unappeased. It reminded me so much of stories of royal ante-rooms which we have read in history-books, in novels, in reminiscences. I was evidently expected, for I was at once ordered to be ushered into the presence. In a wing, reached through various passages, also reminiscent of Napoleonic reception scenes, I came to a door on which my cicerone tapped discreetly. A signal from within caused him to open the door. There in a great arm-chair lolled Napoleon Northcliffe, smiling wearily, pleasant, obviously glad to see me. He did not get up but graciously gave me a hand and asked me to sit beside him.

I had not seen him for many months. The change in the man was too great to be unnoticed. There was a look about him which showed the effects of adulation in America, the never-ceasing floods of flattery, the stories of how he had forced Asquith out and Lloyd George in, the David who had defeated the Goliath Kitchener in the shell-shortage scandal, and the thousand and one pleasant-hearing tales of his public courage, his incorruptibility, his sense of duty and his complete sacrifice to the war spirit—all had been ladled out to him with the inevitable effect of causing him to believe that it was all true and that he was

The Napoleonic Touch

the sole instrument appointed to bring glory to his country and its cause.

No one disputed Northcliffe's enormous services and no one I hope will ever minimise his astounding sense of duty and patriotism. But it was a hectic period when far stronger minds were swept away in torrents of views and performances of acts which they would not have countenanced in normal conditions.

So Lord Northcliffe, in beckoning me to my chair, impressed me with the fact that he was obsessed with the vastness of his power and of the unchallengeable value of his views. He was proposing to do this and that and he wanted me to be *au courant*. He felt that we were still in for a long period of warfare. "I have come back," he said, "firstly because my work in America is now in good hands. Secondly because I think we must now tackle the German enemy in such a way as to bring him to his knees at once. The politicians cannot do it. The Army will not do it until the Americans come over; but it will be a long time before they are fully ready. What I want to do now is to see that our politicians here do not put unnecessary obstacles in the way of the American organisers as they have in so many cases here. I do not want to see the tragedy of the Americans becoming justly impatient, brushing aside our obstructionists and carrying on the management of the War in their own way. That would, indeed, be a tragedy, and I have put these views on paper and shall publish them to-night in all the Press in the form of a letter to the Prime Minister."

Then he told me that the Prime Minister had offered him the post of Air Minister and that he had declined the

Procession

offer in this letter. It was not a very polite letter. Mr. Lloyd George had not notified Lord Cowdray, the Air Minister, that he had offered his post to another man, and he was in consequence a good deal shocked and surprised to see it all in print the next day. But Northcliffe was like that.

Lord Northcliffe talked on for half an hour. He wanted a joint war control, an Allied War Council. Also, he talked at length about propaganda in Germany. He grew quite enthusiastic and sat up several times to shake a finger at me in prophecy.

"Mark my words," he said, "the Germans are only beaten when their war spirit is broken. We must and will break that. Do you remember how Napoleon always relied on propaganda as much as on battalions to disrupt his enemies?"

Then he sat back in his chair, gave me a warm clasp of the hand and dismissed me to give audience to a famous general who had been sitting outside kicking his heels for nearly an hour.



THIRTY-NINE

The Father of "Tess"

WHEN T. P. O'Connor, M.P., the vivid "Tay Pay," lived at Oakley Lodge off Cheyne Walk, just round the corner from Carlyle's house, he used to give most interesting parties both in the house and in his charming garden. There were two good reasons why people liked to go there. One was the attraction of the beautiful Mrs. "Bessie" O'Connor—she was really unusually beautiful and witty—and the other was that "Tay Pay" was the most fashionable book reviewer of an era when it was fashionable to be of a literary turn of mind. So there in Chelsea you could meet everyone worth meeting: authors, actors, statesmen, soldiers, refugees—Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, Ellen Terry, Ada Rehan, Augustin Daly, Maurice Barrymore, Edwin Arnold, John Redmond, Mrs. Stewart, mother of Parnell, the Baroness de Roques, mother of Mrs. Maybrick, John Singer Sargent, Algernon Swinburne, James McNeill Whistler, Henri Rochefort, George Meredith, Mrs. Bancroft, and so on and on.

At one of these parties I met Mr. Edward Blake, M.P., the Irish-Canadian statesman who had preceded Sir Wilfrid Laurier as Leader of the Canadian Opposition, and had now returned to Ireland where at Longford they at once elected him to the Imperial Parliament, to which he brought much experience and dignity. Mr. Blake introduced me to

Procession

a quiet, rather countrified-looking individual, who was dressed in tweeds, which was the sort of thing one did not usually wear at parties in town. You may, nowadays, wear anything or nothing as you like and the more bizarre you look the more you will contribute to the entertainment of the afternoon or evening; but at the time of which I write, men wore frock-coats on their backs and shiny top hats on their heads, and only eccentrics or people from the outer marches of Australia, Canada and Africa were forgiven if they displayed other fashions. Also you could wear what you liked if you were a celebrity. Wherefore I concluded that the stranger with Mr. Blake was a celebrity; which surmise turned out to be correct, for he was none other than Mr. Thomas Hardy, author of *Tess*; *Jude*; *Mayor of Casterbridge*.

He had a pleasant twinkle in his eye and a simple way of expressing himself. We three went off into a corner of the garden to talk politics, which I soon found did not interest Mr. Hardy in the least. He showed a little more liveliness in attention when Blake gave us a brilliant description of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and of Sir Charles Tupper, the two Canadian champions of politics, but Ireland and its age-old problems and intrigues gave him nothing to think about.

Then we got on the functions of the lawyer, which was Blake; the journalist, which was myself; and the author, which was Thomas Hardy. The great novelist awoke and gave us a wonderful dissertation on the art of story-telling, the duty which the writer bears towards Truth, and the inevitable failure which must come to him who seeks to tell a story merely for the sake of story-telling, without

The Father of "Tess"

adhering to the rules of life; all very abstract and not too consistent in view of Hardy's own stories, which were even at that time so seriously attacked, on one side by the realists because they were said to be too unreal, and on the other by the idealists because they were too nakedly factish. Then suddenly he turned to me and said:

"Do you know Strachey?"

I knew what was coming, for I had followed the controversy over the *Spectator's* attitude on *Tess* and her morals, so I said provokingly:

"Do you mean my friend St. Loe Strachey, of the *Spectator*? I know him well."

There followed an explanation of Hardy's views on *Tess*, on Strachey, on reviewers in particular. He had been very well treated, all things considered, by reviewers, but I gathered from this conversation that if he owned a newspaper or a magazine he would be chary about the employment of literary critics.

"What about 'Tay Pay'?" I asked. "Would you employ him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hardy. "O'Connor never reviews a book bitterly. He is always just. He is the most consummate artist in taking the 'inners' of a story and presenting it efficiently in condensed form to the reader; and that is all that a reviewer should be asked to do or expected to do."

I regret that I did not put down the details of this most absorbing conversation. Hardy's observations were crowded with wise suggestions and telling phrases. I do recall, however, that in another part of the garden that afternoon, after our little group had separated, a woman was

Procession

saying to "Tay Pay" that she had that morning been deeply interested in his "vituperative, excoriating criticism of that dreadful Mr. X's book on Victor Hugo," and "Tay Pay" answered:

"Yes, Oi was glad to have the opportunity of tearing the mask from off the face of that dirty rascal and so Oi put me pen in all the vitriol Oi could lay me hands on."

Which, I thought, was another view of the great reviewer's complete impartiality in the matter of criticism!

Some days later I met Mr. Hardy again and I repeated to him the conversation that I had overheard after his departure from "Tay Pay's" garden. He smiled rather wanly and observed that perhaps, now that "Tay Pay" was eliminated, the incident further confirmed his view of critics, reviewers and reviews.

"There is only one way of escape," he said. "Write a novel so closely associated with every detail of life and truth that not even the finest microscope in a critic's eye can discover a departure from fact. Put as much romance in it as you like, but never shut the gate on Fact."



FORTY

The Lost Chord

I go once or twice a week to some rooms on the ground floor of an office building in Victoria Street where I have to meet a number of colleagues as members of a semi-political organisation. The office building was once, like all the other office buildings in Victoria Street, a fashionable flat-building devoted mainly to the uses of members of both Houses of Parliament. Victoria Street was a street of flats, almost the first in London, and they were much in request. Forty or fifty years ago it was a quiet, dignified avenue with no sign or sense of anything so commonplace as business or auctioneers' offices. Here and there the flag of a foreign state proclaimed the address of a Legation or a Consulate. The American Legation, before it became an Embassy, had its headquarters there. Liveried footmen stood at the doors and broughams and victorias ambled along where now hurtle the red omnibuses, the rattling taxicabs and the thunderous beer vans. Victoria Street represented dignity, wealth, good form.

The rooms to which I now go once or twice a week were familiar to me many years ago as the habitation of Sir Arthur Sullivan, the most popular British composer of his generation. I used to see him there from time to time towards the end of his great career. We used to discuss musical criticism, of which I was wholly ignorant, a fact

Procession

which never deterred him from attacking me on the shortcomings of the music critics. He would accept no excuse of mine that the mere fact of my being a journalist did not justify me in assuming that I knew aught of musical criticism. I was a journalist and that was enough.

I had a friend, a most accomplished singer, named Eugène Oudin, to whom had been entrusted the important leading part of *Ivanhoe* at the new English Opera House which is now the Palace Theatre. This was after the split in the partnership of Gilbert and Sullivan. Both D'Oyley Carte, the impresario, and Sullivan believed that the time had come for the establishment of English Opera, and so the great house was built in Cambridge Circus at the extremity of the old slum district. In place of the indispensable Gilbert they put forward Julian Sturgis to write the libretto, and the critics found mild fault, in spite of grand music, magnificent stage setting and fine singing. The public, and apparently the critics too, wanted Mapleson's Italian Verdi Trovatorians with their high notes and the Campanini-Tamagno-Grisi ululations, and they did not believe that an English composer was capable of producing anything for a long run in the grand opera department. This made Sullivan very angry. I had occasion to see him with Oudin, the singer who had once been a dentist in Ohio; a charming, cultured, well-taught artist, but terribly shy. Oudin in his turn had been fairly well treated by the critics. Actually Sullivan had no great cause for complaint against them, but he happened to be in a temperamental mood and was for advising Oudin to give up opera and take up company promoting, which was just then quite popular. I do not remember what happened to

The Lost Chord

Oudin in a professional way after *Ivanhoe* was withdrawn. I always had an idea that he actually did something of the sort that had been suggested by the great composer. Some time later I went to see Sullivan in Victoria Street. Comyns Carr, who was doing something in the libretto line for him, still striving to replace the querulous old Gilbert, went with me. Sir Arthur was sitting at his piano strumming. We talked of Oscar Hammerstein, "the only man who is willing to lose money at opera for opera's sake." He began most eloquently and with his indefinable charm to talk about people who were artists and people who were not, when through the open window came the sound of a barrel-organ at work. Sir Arthur stopped talking. A smile spread over his expressive, sensitive face. There in Victoria Street stood an Italian organ-grinder, touching his hat in tribute to the great *maestro*. A tiny monkey was pirouetting on the top of the organ which was wheezing out the grand notes of "The Lost Chord."

We stood and watched the quaint spectacle and then turned to look at the *maestro* whose face glowed.

When the last note had itched itself out of the box the composer of "The Lost Chord," the most popular song of the Victorian era, went closer to the window and threw the player a shilling. Then he turned to us and said:

"He comes here regularly and always plays it. Now that is a true critic."

The next time I heard "The Lost Chord" was in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1900 at the burial of Sir Arthur Sullivan.



FORTY-ONE

Tariff Reform means Work for All

It has been my high privilege to have personal relations with three men whose influence on the economic condition of Great Britain and, indeed, the British Empire, can hardly be measured in words. These three names are Joseph Chamberlain, Cyril Arthur Pearson and Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook). Without Chamberlain's campaign in 1903, which forced complacent Britain at least to lift up its lazy head and pay attention to his striking sentences, his clarion calls to "think imperially"; without the directing energy, the concentration and the enthusiasm of Arthur Pearson, who was described by Mr. Chamberlain as "the greatest hustler ever born"; without Lord Beaverbrook's determination in spite of the party leaders to resuscitate Tariff Reform, to bring the Empire into line, to revive the almost dead industries, the victims of an archaic fiscal system—I say that without these three men Great Britain would to-day be without power, without interest and without hope.

I do not intend here to dilate on merits or demerits of systems, policies or even theories. All we know is that if foreign countries were still permitted to dump on British shores the surplus products of their manufacturing and

Procession

agricultural industries, as they did without let or hindrance during all the years of the downward trend of British trade, there would to-day be no pleased Britons pointing with proper pride to the achievements of the only nation that has not gone nearer to the wall. It may not be due to tariffs and preferential agreements. It may be that suddenly something else has intervened to give the Chancellor of the Exchequer an annual surplus. What it can be other than the new protective tariffs no one can tell us; so that we are entitled to say that the credit belongs in the first place to Joseph Chamberlain and his coadjutor Pearson in having pointed the way in the face of almost revolutionary opposition from the very people who should have welcomed his policy; and finally to Lord Beaverbrook who, like his predecessor, has the satisfaction of having outlived his scoffers and sees the Empire on the fair way to complete union.

I remember—most of us who were in the middle of things thirty-two or thirty-three years ago remember—the widespread fear of the word “Protection.” Over and over again we were admonished by our leaders to avoid calling it “Protection.” The disciples of Richard Cobden rejoiced in the appealing “Free Trade,” and soon achieved the triumph of giving to “Protection” the most sinister interpretation like “Smallpox,” “Plague,” “Yellow Fever” and “Cholera.” It was a thing to be avoided. The Trade Unions, practising Protection for their own domestic interests by excluding all outsiders from their benefits, were the principal antagonists of Protection. That was because Lord Northcliffe in a fit of misunderstanding had blazoned the contents’ bills with “Stomach Tax,” and because Mr.

Tariff Reform means Work for All

Chamberlain himself had in May 1903, tried to be frank with his hearers, for he had said in the House of Commons that "if you are to give a preference to the Colonies you must put a tax on food." He did not go all out in explanation and the result was Fear.

I have never known three men more dissimilar in personality, in temperament and in method than these three protectionist protagonists. Chamberlain was a cold, unemotional, single-minded, hard-thinking, public-spirited man who had made a deep study of governance. He had passed through the trying school of Birmingham's local politics. He knew politics by heart. There was not a turn of the game with which he was not familiar. His great Liberal agent, Schnadhorst, who was looked upon as the organiser of victory, was merely part of the Chamberlain machine; an acute, shrewd, active handler of men, but without the guiding hand of Joseph Chamberlain, the strange-sounding name of Schnadhorst would to-day probably be unknown outside the suburbs of Birmingham.

I saw Mr. Chamberlain when he was Colonial Minister, just before his resignation from the Cabinet owing to differences with his colleagues, Ritchie, Lord George Hamilton and the Cecil family, led by Mr. Balfour. He had his Tariff Reform League going ahead under the ægis of Arthur Pearson, its Chairman. He said to me that "the time will come when all these men, who are opposing us because of a petty fear that our food will cost more, will wonder how they could ever have been so astoundingly foolish, for they forget that with prosperity, abundant prosperity, a few pence more on the daily cost will mean nothing."

Procession

He had a strong, firm, resonant voice. He was never at a loss for the right word. He never used words that meant nothing. He did not pad his sentences. He cared for applause, of course, but he never went out of his way to weave rhetorical garlands.

When Chamberlain made his revolutionary proposals in 1903 he was without a Press in the metropolis. They were all either afraid or openly hostile. It was my lot to be one of a little camarilla which put Mr. Chamberlain in touch with Arthur Pearson, who was then principal proprietor of the *Daily Express*, a new paper which he had founded three years before. Pearson was not a politician and he was not interested in Tariff Reform. He was an open-air man. He was even then driving a forty-horsepower Mercedes car—a monster of a thing which he said could, at a pinch, go sixty miles an hour. I drove with Pearson in this Juggernaut from Paris to Boulogne. He went thirty-five miles an hour and I was correspondingly frightened. He rode fiery horses in his own riding school; he played golf on his own private links; he ran magazines with a sure hand, for he had that strange, uncanny faculty which could disclose to you the exact number of pins that would be required to reach the moon; or how many beans make six. He was, indeed, the personification of a new type of journalism. All he required was a widening of his knowledge of world affairs and of history, and he would be equipped as few were; and in due course he acquired that knowledge. When Arthur Pearson went blind in 1912 he was a capable journalist.

But back there in 1903 he was a novice in whose hands lay the chance to make or unmake his paper, and to do even

Tariff Reform means Work for All

greater things. There were several of us in charge of his editorial pages who were aching for a chance to "back up Joe." We pleaded with Pearson. He said:

"Wait. Let's see what happens. I am not so sure that he is right."

It was heart-breaking to see our great chance sliding away, never to be regained unless something was done at once. We did it. We managed by various ways known to diplomacy to interest Mr. Chamberlain in the proposition to capture Pearson. Presently he said:

"I will see Mr. Pearson and try to convince him."

That was the end of the proprietor's opposition to the "Stomach Tax." In a day or two Pearson came to my house, all flushed and excited. He had been to see Joe. He had been convinced by the spellbinder.

"Henceforth," he proclaimed, "we will advocate what you have been striving for. I am all out for Tariff Reform."

Then the great hustle began. The Tariff Reform League came into being. Everything else was submerged. It was Mr. Chamberlain's opportunity as it was ours. Tariff Reform became a slogan, but the country was too much ingrained in the Cobdenite tradition to give more than ears to the platform cries. Pearson worked most of the hours of the day. Never was there such enthusiasm, and it went on till the 1906 election almost damped him.

"Politics," said Pearson to me years after, when he had impressed himself on the nation as the blind leader of the blind, "politics is one of those phases in a man's life which comes like measles and whooping-cough. You have to go through it. But for all the selfish, petty, ungenerous

Procession

rivalries in existence give me a political movement. I never want to be mixed up again with politics."

Arthur Pearson was a giant of enthusiasm. I was his colleague and friend when blindness overtook him, when he was depressed, hopeless. But only for a few weeks. He conquered his depression and in doing so created a spirit which was unconquerable. No man performed higher services than this unselfish, kindly, energetic regenerator of darkness. What the blinded soldiers of the War owed to him can never be appreciated.

Now came a hiatus in the affairs of Tariff Reform, Protection, Cartels and Subsidies. The Tariff Reform League began to falter. Joseph Chamberlain, paralysed, lived on in Birmingham, no longer able to read; Pearson, blinded, had long since retired from that sort of propaganda. The War came. The great protagonist of Tariffs died. It was comparable to the dark centuries that followed the departure of the Romans from Britain. Here and there, men like Bonar Law remained faithful to the cause, but other pressing matters of State kept their theories in the background.

Then along came Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook to be. Coming fresh from Canada, he spoke to the electors of Ashton-under-Lyne and told them about the wide prairies and the fertile vastness of the Dominions beyond the seas. He made little progress at first but gradually he succeeded. He was then a halting and uninspiring speaker. He saw early that if you want to impress your views on the public you must not only do so from platforms but you must control a newspaper or newspapers. He was born with a telescopic mind. What you and I see six weeks ahead Lord

Tariff Reform means Work for All

Beaverbrook brushes away, and sees through it six years of vista in front. So he came to the *Daily Express*; slowly finding his steps; measuring, appraising and becoming fascinated by a new business. He not only mastered the intricacies of editorial "putting over," but he grasped the secrets of the business department, a most important section of journalism, and laid them bare for his own tuition. In short, he became a newspaper king—and there he is. But he is more. He knew that the slogan "Tariff Reform" had outworn itself; so he invented Empire Free Trade. A rose by any other name! People of the sort who, thirty years ago, scoffed at the Chamberlain doctrine now applaud the new champion. The leaders, as before, are backward because they like to test the direction of the wind before deciding on their course; but Lord Beaverbrook goes steadily on and the Empire is in closer union.

If I were young again I think I would adopt this astonishing man's methods. How successful I might be I do not know, but it is all so simple. First you must have an unquenchable ambition. Next you must be sure of yourself and have no false modesties or false standards. You must work and you must plan. You must pull through. When Lord Beaverbrook has decided on a course he goes through to the end and lets nothing divert him. I liken him in this to a ferret which is after a rabbit. A dozen fatter, slower, more attractive rabbits may amble across the path but this ferret goes on after number one rabbit. That is Lord Beaverbrook. When he chases a rabbit, be it a parliamentary seat, a newspaper, a political policy or a political enemy, he allows no cross-cutting to put him off the scent.

I have been a close observer of this remarkable man

Procession

for nigh on a quarter of a century. He does everything like that. He came to England in 1910, an indifferent speaker. He was so bad that people laughed. Now they listen spell-bound by his magical oratory. He had never played tennis. I helped him to start. In a couple of months he was an expert. He had never been in politics. Within a year his advice was sought on intricate points of the game. I imagine that when he lived in Canada his principal reading was to be found in company reports. To-day he reads more books past and present, with the Bible as never-failing accompaniment, than any man I have ever known.

He knows every secret and manages to keep it inviolate. He has queer ideas about the relations of employer and employed in that he habitually overpays. When he first came to London he was inordinately sensitive to criticism of any sort. To-day he pays no attention. The more drastic the criticism the better he likes it. Joe Chamberlain was like that, too.



FORTY-TWO

The Gentle Murderer

My friend George Wetton was an advertisement director of the old school. A generation or so ago advertisement directors and managers and canvassers went about their business in quite a different fashion from that pursued to-day by their successors. Advertising in general was not so much a science as it was a matter of personal contact in getting business for newspapers and periodicals. So then, the head of any advertisement department, if he was at all enterprising and energetic, depended mostly on his personality and his sartorial attractions to "pull things off" rather than on the mere exposition of a newspaper's drawing power. One of the most successful advertising canvassers of my acquaintance in the 'nineties used to emerge from Fleet Street every morning in a smart victoria drawn by a pair of high-stepping bays. The coachman sat in glorious dignity on the box, all spick and span, and beside him was a young "Tiger" with arms folded so tightly that it seemed they could never come apart. Lolling back on leather cushions of the victoria was my friend the advertising director, frock-coat, lavender gloves, shiny hat, bent on his daily round of calls to gladden the eyes of Bond Street and Regent Street *couteurires*. That was how business was done. Even Lord Northcliffe, the most advanced adventurer of his time in the new field of scientific advertising,

Procession

always urged that the advertisement director should only venture out, if he could do so, in a Rolls Royce car. My humble walk along Fleet Street was often enlivened and made more pleasurable by the spectacle of Horace Imber, Northcliffe's immaculate advertisement director, gliding by nobly in a glittering Rolls.

As I say, my friend George Wetton, who directed our advertising policy in the first decade of the century until his death, was a man of the old school. He was always dressed as if the elder Poole had only five seconds before left off stroking the folds of his frock-coat or pulled more taut the hang of his wonderful four-in-hand scarf with its appropriate pin. He was the President of the Magic Circle, which was, and is still, I believe, a club of amateur *prestidigitateurs*; in other words, sleight-of-hand performers; and added to these attractions George had a kind heart which never permitted him to say "No" to any of his clients' impecunious clerks who invariably "touched" him for petty loans that were never repaid. The effect of all this was that Wetton's pleasing personality and his popularity added much to the grist that he brought in to the mill, irrespective of our particular value as an advertising medium. If there was a bad day and the advertisement director had not been too successful, as frequently would be the case in those early days, it would happen that occasionally the full quota of advertising space was not taken, and so there were sometimes bargains to be picked up by an enterprising advertiser who would care to wait about until six or seven in the evening when the advertising space schedule was made up.

Here was the chance for the patent-medicine agents to

The Gentle Murderer

get in a half double or a quarter column at a reduced rate. No such luck for them in these more business-like days. Frequently, in my capacity as Editor, I had occasion to pass the advertisement director's quarters, and there you could see two or three keen-eyed bargain-hunters waiting for the score, so to speak. The most conspicuous was an accomplished owner of patent health salts who had many large cigars sticking from his pockets and stuffed into his magnificent cigar cases, of which he had many. He usually carried off the extra space because he had more money to spend. I learned much about health salts and ingenious business-pushing schemes from this exceedingly virile old gentleman. Whenever I knew he was in the building I went down and had a chat with him.

Another bargain-hunter with whom I spoke often because of his great knowledge of publicity was our old friend Hawley Harvey Crippen. Yes, Crippen, the celebrated, the fearsome, the notorious wife-killer of Hilldrop Crescent! He was as mild and innocent looking as a curate; a kindly, unpretentious, unassuming little chap with large inquiring eyes behind large spectacles and a fine walrus moustache which hid any murderous intent that may have lurked in the corners of his mouth. I talked much with Crippen because of his American experiences. He was an oculist and ear-specialist of sorts, qualified medical and all that, but had come to England in charge of a patent medicine advertising business owned by Munyons! His wife he told me—and he promised to bring her along one evening when she was free of her music-hall engagements—was also an American and she had relations somewhere in Michigan who were journalists and owned a weekly paper,

Procession

and he said she would be interested to see how we did it in the big town in England.

One day Crippen came up to my room after he had failed to get a bargain advertisement because the space was full, to make a suggestion for an educational competition which he thought might prove beneficial to both sides, paper and public.

"The trouble in this country," said Crippen—he was called Dr. Crippen—"is that the young people do not get a chance to make their name unless they belong to the upper classes. There are so many young people of the poorer classes who fail because there are no facilities for them," and so on.

He then outlined a scholarship scheme which we adopted, and I have no doubt that owing to Crippen's initiative and his high moral resolve, the nation has been enriched by the educational achievements of a number of recipients of that scholarship.

He came up a good many times in the course of the years, six or seven at least. It was at about the time that he found the presence of his wife less attractive than that of Miss Le Neve, his typist, that he offered to write an article on higher education and its effect on the spiritual life of a nation! I thought it was a trifle far-fetched but that in any event it would be more suitable in a college magazine than in a daily newspaper.

I thought too that Crippen ought to have been a non-conformist preacher rather than a medicine advertiser, and then he went out of my ken. The fact is that it was about this time that he went off to Antwerp with his lady-love—no one in the world would ever have thought it of him—

The Gentle Murderer

disguised her as a boy, and called her his son; in which masquerade they were eventually captured on the other side of the Atlantic on board the C.P.R. liner *Montrose* by Inspector Dew and Sergeant Mitchell.

So they brought back this pleasant little harmless-looking murderer and, of course, hanged him. For an educated man he was certainly unintelligent in the manner of hiding his crime. He deserved all he got and I imagine that he agreed with the verdict.

I am sure, however, that he did not agree with the verdict of posterity which puts him down as one of the fiercest, blood-thirstiest, murdering bullies of modern times. He would have much preferred to go down in history as a gentle user of hyoscine; for to him murder must have been abhorrent except as a means to an end.

As the years grow the name of Crippen takes on fiercer and fiercer suggestions.



FORTY-THREE

"Jimmy" White, Fortune's Gigolo

"JIMMY" WHITE, the speculator, who flung millions about and died poor by his own hand, had the most astonishing eyes. They were large and arresting, a deep violet in colour, and when he fixed them on you it gave you a queer feeling; which, I take it, has something to do with hypnotism. He spoke with a Lancashire accent that was comic in its aggressiveness, appositeness and slanginess, and he employed a vocabulary which, save for its originality of terms, was as classical and pure as any put into the mouths of Shakespearian actors.

Many times I have sat at this remarkable man's luncheon table, either in his Strand offices or in his rooms above Daly's Theatre where, surrounded by earls and baronets, bankers, stock-brokers, actors, jockeys, fist-fighters and cotton magnates, "Jimmy" led the conversation on any and all known and unknown subjects, always with authority and with directness.

I have come up to his ante-room and found waiting there men whose names were known at the top of affairs.

"Tell him to wait," Jimmy would direct his attendant. "Tell him to wait till I send out for him." And wait the

Procession

great man would, while Jimmy inside would continue his dissertation on cotton-spinning, paper-making, stage direction, poetry, electrical engineering, architecture, or whatever it was he was talking about at the moment.

I asked White once for a donation towards a small testimonial in which I was interested. I would have been grateful for ten or fifteen pounds. "Right," he said, drawing out a cheque-book and writing rapidly. "Here's a couple of thousand for you. If you want more, say so."

I expostulated, said I did not want so much, but this dizzy-heighted gambler, who had "handled" £150,000,000 of the public's money in eight years, stopped me by saying, "Don't be sentimental. You take that or nowt."

Then, presently, he became involved financially, as such men always do, and he recognised at last that it meant ruin if he did not extricate himself. He was desperately deep in the British Controlled oil speculation, through which salvation could only come to him by a higher price for the shares. If he could get in all his friends to buy, it would do the trick and defeat the opposing syndicate.

On June 7, 1927, I received a note, which was probably duplicated to dozens of acquaintances. It read thus:

"MY DEAR BLUM,

"Buy yourself 5000 British Controlled Preference Shares immediately on the opening of the market tomorrow morning and sell in fourteen days. You will make a hell of a profit.

"Believe me, yours sincerely,

"JIMMY WHITE."

"Jimmy" White, Fortune's Gigolo

It did not work. I imagine some of those who received this "tip" followed it—and lost in proportion. White's opponents were too strong and his plans failed.

Shortly after he went down to Foxholes, his famous racing stable near Swindon, and there, alone, ruined, without hope of recovery, he ended his astonishing life by inhaling chloroform. His last act was as theatrical as his previous ones. He sat down and wrote a letter to Lord Beaverbrook "for publication," a long recital of his bizarre career ending with the suggestion that here was a "scoop" worth paying for. "It is worth £2000 to you. Please give that sum to my wife whose other securities I have gambled away."

That was the end of a grotesque, picturesque, kindly, blatant and tragic character whose millions had made many people happy, many more unhappy, had created knighthoods and more fortunes for his followers and ready tools, and who, in his lavish, illiterate and fantastic career once again proved that you can do anything in England if you set your mind to it.



FORTY-FOUR

Edison, the Prophet

I COUNT it an unusual privilege to have known the two greatest inventors of all time, namely Thomas Alva Edison and Senatore Marconi. Incidentally, their mixed antecedents seem to bear out the suggestion that no single nationality may lay claim to the exclusive glory of their possession. Edison's father was of Dutch descent; his mother Scottish. Marconi's father was an Italian; his mother Irish. The poor old Anglo-Saxon race does not appear to have a share in any credit that may here be claimed. Senatore Marconi goes on from invention to invention for the benefit of the world and like his great *compère* Edison he keeps modestly to himself, whereas if he liked he could manage to have his personality blazoned before the whole universe. As it is, the great majority of the people know little or nothing about him; how he lives, works, plays and talks.

My own observation of him is that he does all these things with as little effort as possible. He lives sedately and unostentatiously and he talks always with simplicity and restraint. All of his energies appear to be directed to his life's work. Are there more than a dozen men in the world to-day, are there half a dozen, who have achieved only a quarter as much as Marconi? I doubt it. He has completely altered the machinery of existence. But Marconi himself will never tell you this.

Procession

Neither would Mr. Edison, who did even more to bring the world out of darkness. He never indulged in self-laudation. There is always this to remember when discussing these great men: They did not require advertisement. Their work made it for them. I suppose I could look back further than most men on a more than casual acquaintance with Edison. We had a common ground of sympathetic communion in that we were both members of a profession now practically extinct, namely, that of Morse telegraph operator. Most youths of my time in the small towns learned the fascinating method of electrical transmission of letters and words which had been invented by Professor Samuel F. B. Morse. It was the most common and popular method of entering the older professions. A large number of young Morse telegraph operators became journalists. The dot and dash sounder was the quickest stepping-stone to the newspaper office. To-day the Morse telegraphist has disappeared and in his place has come the machine operator, mainly female, mechanical, perfunctory and mass produced. Whenever I visited America in the past forty years or so I made it a point to get into touch with Edison at Menlo Park in New Jersey. Sometimes he would come up to New York for an old-time "shop talk." The last time, we forgathered at the Lotos Club, where we had with us Walter Phillips, another old-time Morser who had become a great figure in the Press associations of his time; a poet, a dreamer and a hero-worshipper.

Incidentally Phillips had invented a shorthand telegraphic code which, before the advent of automatic telegraphy, caused great savings of time on the wires. His hero-worship was, of course, centred on Mr. Tom Edison who would

Edison, the Prophet

sit smiling happily while we shouted into his ear (he was terribly deaf) something that would remind him of his earlier and more struggling days. He had, for instance, once given Phillips a crude, elemental specimen of his original model of the phonograph; a cylinder encased in tinfoil with a little tin trumpet attached. It made funny noises which you could nearly always decode into words. Phillips and I had worked on the model and produced some quite good results, and this pleased Edison inordinately, notwithstanding the fact that in the intervening years he had perfected the machine by driving it electrically, and the cylinder was now the familiar wax tube.

It is strange that the human mind and heart are ever on the move for something new and unfamiliar. The quest for the novel, for the new experience goes on from the earliest conscious and articulate hours to the last flicker. To put it simply and colloquially, the tragedian desires to be a comedian, the basso wishes he had been born a tenor, the cobbler regrets that he could not be a policeman, the policeman envies the publican. Here at the luncheon with Edison and Phillips at the Lotos Club, Thomas Alva Edison, the world's most famous inventor, the world's most undoubted benefactor, the recipient of all the honours, said quite plaintively:

"I always wish I had become a reporter. You fellows beat me to it there. I do not think there is anything more interesting, more absorbing, more diversified in all life than there is to be found in journalism. I don't, of course, mean just reporting. What I mean is that it must be a wonderful thing to be able to sit down and tell a thousand or a hundred thousand people every day what is in your

Procession

mind; advise them how to conduct themselves in all matters, private and public; educate them, amuse them, irritate them if necessary. You two have got the better of me there. My public uses me; you use your public. That is the difference between us."

Walter Phillips, hero-worshipper, interposed here.

"But you forget, Tom," he said, "that anyone with a proper modicum of brains and industry can be an editor. You, on the other hand, are Heaven-sent; you are unusual. Nothing like you has ever happened before. Think what would have been lost to the world if you had become a journalist and not an inventor!"

"Oh, I don't know," answered the Wizard, "I do not suppose I would have given up inventing. I would have carried that on as a diversion for my leisure moments. I imagine you in your Connecticut home give up some of your time to gardening, or to archery or to tennis. Well, I would keep up my little laboratory, but I would make my newspaper the more important affair of my life."

Here Mr. Edison launched into a prophecy which, in the light of later events, was remarkable. He said:

"You see, I can visualise the time when the telephone will be so developed that there will no longer be necessity for wires. That is coming fast. Lots of people are working on that, and young Marconi has done wonders already. Well, one day there will be information by way of etheric force and people will be listening to words transmitted to them in that way. It will be like the preachers in the churches to-day as against the newspapers. That is why I would prefer to be a newspaper man. I could say the same things from the pulpit as I could in the columns of

Edison, the Prophet

a newspaper, but the public would only give me half an ear in church, whereas in my paper they would give me all their attention. That is what will happen one of these days in the ether. You will hear your sermons read through etheric forces and the next day you will turn to your newspaper to read the same sermon and so make sure that it is so. *For mark my words, the human machine requires to see in order to believe.* You tell a man something and in nine cases out of ten he will want confirmation of it. Please pass the celery."

That was the longest speech I ever heard from Thomas Alva Edison.



FORTY-FIVE

Blut und Eisen

My chief, James Gordon Bennett, the most efficient as well as the most erratic journalist I ever knew, ordered me one day in the middle of a vast storm, to report to him in Paris from London. "Most urgent," said the telegram, and so it happened that I was one of three unhappy passengers who dared to cross from Dover in the little side-wheel packet *The Foam*. Bennett always waited for a storm to send for me. He knew I was a dreadfully bad sailor and it gladdened his sadistic soul to know that I would suffer. Great fun!

It was no joy-ride forty odd years ago to travel across the Channel. There were five or six vessels, *The Foam*, *The Petrel*, *The Wave* and so on, which performed every gyrating evolution known to human and inhuman ingenuity. They were small vessels of a few hundred tons, open-decked with no superstructures, and they were propelled by two great paddle-wheels of the old-fashioned type. Marine luxury was confined to a cubby-hole called a bar, a "saloon" composed mostly of horse-hair settees, swinging oil lamps and a perpetual smell of bilge. In bad weather you were either lashed in your chair to a deck railing or deposited willy-nilly into the inferno of the saloon below and left to your fate. The only consolation, if any, was that you got to Calais inside the hour, to be welcomed by

Procession

bowls of steaming broth and plates of wonderfully prepared roast chicken. That is, if you were well enough, after the buffeting, to think of eating at all. I had to make this dreadful crossing two or three times every winter, apparently only because Mr. Bennett liked to think of me as having a rough time in the Channel; which I assuredly had.

On this particular occasion—I remember it was in the Christmas week when, of course, I would have private and pleasant engagements which he would cause to be disrupted if it was at all possible—the business in hand was so important that I was kept waiting for three days before my chief deigned to receive me, and then he had actually forgotten why he had sent for me!

“Never mind,” he said, “I have thought of something else. As you know, I am a friend of Prince Bismarck. Go and see him in Germany—I’ll give you a letter to him—and ask him to show you the manuscript of his book *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, and if possible let us have it for publication.”

Then, with the air of a conquistador, he said:

“You may go now and do not come back empty-handed!”

I went to Friedrichsruh, near Hamburg, where the great ex-Chancellor was living in retirement. He was close on eighty. He sat in his study amidst a litter of papers, a cigar in his hand, double-breasted frock-coat buttoned tightly over his heavy figure, a Great Dane crouched beside him. As I looked at those great bushy eyebrows I remember the thought passing through my mind: “How like Bismarck’s pictures!”

He had just become reconciled, superficially at least, to William II who had so ruthlessly dismissed him a few years before, and so he would not talk about him. The burden of his discussion, however, was about "My August Master William the First." He showed me some of his *Gedanken* papers but would not part with them for publication; nor were they to be issued until after his death. He was very interested in what I had to tell him about Grover Cleveland, the President of the United States, whom I knew personally, and he had an intimate knowledge of Gladstone, Salisbury, Parnell and Lord Randolph Churchill, the father of Winston.

"The cleverest man in the British Parliament," said Prince Bismarck, "is that witty Irishman Timothy Healy. He saves Parliament from tragedy."

"But quite the most attractive of all the British Parliamentarians I have ever known," he said, "was Benjamin Disraeli. He was far and away the ablest and I liked him enormously. Also, he was a charming conversationalist on so many subjects unconnected with affairs of State that I never failed to derive pleasure from his company."

The Prince spoke excellent English. He knew London intimately, and I gathered that one of his great regrets was that he had never succeeded in cementing a lasting friendship between the Germans and the British; for as we talked he repeatedly spoke of his constant instructions to German agents, ministers and ambassadors throughout the world to do all in their power to promote good relations with the British.

Nor was he antagonistic to the French people as one would have supposed him to be, judging at least from his

Procession

history before and after the Franco-Prussian War. He was a great reader of all sorts of French writings. He was word perfect in Napoleonic lore; and he spoke of Zola's work with deep admiration. "If there were more Zolas," he said, "there would not be so many gullible people in France."

You may like to know what were my impressions of this man who had made Germany all of a sudden a great power. The world used to think of him as a huge, boorish, jack-booted Junker who was ruthless in voice and manner and utterly devoid of consideration for others. He was exactly the opposite. He spoke in a soft, modulated well-controlled voice. He smiled frequently and his manners were courteous and polished. I was enormously struck by this revelation for I had expected to be bullied. In later years I had the same impression of Lord Kitchener whose sibilant tones were terribly misleading.

My lasting memory of the aged ex-Chancellor is a picture of him pouring out two glasses of Moselle as he said:

"Auf Wiedersehen. Give you my best greetings to Herr Gordon Bennett and say that privately I agree with him in his estimate of the new Germany."

(Bennett held that William II was a sort of Public Enemy No. 1.)



FORTY-SIX

Huckleberry Finn

WHEN I was a very young and timorous reporter I was sent one day to interview Mark Twain in his home at Hartford in Connecticut. I rang the bell. A maid answered.

"I would like to see Mr. Clemens, please," I said, and handed her a card.

There was a bellow from within.

"Send him away. He's a book agent. I know. They always begin like that. Send him away!"

It was the voice of the world's greatest humorist—not at all humorous.

Then there appeared behind the maid a half-dressed, collarless figure, with greyish tousled hair, a great greyish moustache garlanding a corn-cob pipe.

Mr. Clemens looked at me fiercely and then relaxed.

"You don't look like a book agent," he said. "You are something else. . . . A reporter? Well, I'll be (something or other). . . . *New York Herald*? Well, I'll be. . . . How old are? Well, I'll be. . . . Send you all the way here to interview me? Well, I'll be. . . . Come in."

That was my first contact with this adorable creature, for that he was in every sense. There was a great disparity in our ages for he was over thirty years my senior, but we had a common bond in our earlier experiences. We were both graduates of little family country newspapers,

his in Missouri and mine in Wisconsin, in conditions as like as two pins. We had gone through the gruelling experience of being printer's devils, which meant sweeping up, learning to set and distribute type, washing the formes with a foul mixture of lye and water, treading the job press, carrying water for the boiler and fetching beer in a tin pail for the foreman printer.

The foreman printer of a country newspaper in the pioneer days had the same characteristics wherever he was found and he was certainly never popular with the printer's devil.

"I suppose in due course," said Mark Twain to me, while we were exchanging experiences, "I suppose in due course I shall get to Heaven. There, one of the first things I shall behold will be that foreman sitting on a silver cloud with a golden lyre on his knee. I shall not hesitate. I shall rush straight out at him; pull off his false angel's beard, denounce him in a loud voice as a fraud and a brute and then I'll kick him as hard as I can until he runs off to the only place to which foreman printers belong."

Tom Sawyer and *Huckleberry Finn* were Mark Twain's youthful autobiography, his own rough experiences put down on paper as they occurred to him. He liked *Huckleberry Finn* best, and no doubt the world agrees that it was the finest thing he ever wrote.

Later, when I met him in London he had suffered losses by the failure of the firm of Charles L. Webster & Co., a publishing firm in which he had invested his savings. The firm had made an enormous sum from the *Life of General Grant* and also of *Pope Leo XIII*, but they extended themselves too far and the fine edifice came down with a

"Huckleberry Finn"

crash; and so poor old Mark Twain had to begin all over again to make money not only to recoup himself but also to pay his debts. He was now over sixty and his humour had become mellowed while his energies had softened. But he went abroad and made it all back again. He lived for a while in Berlin, in Vienna and in Florence. In Vienna he fell in with the famous Professor Virchow, for whom he had a great regard, and through him he became interested in a patent chocolate called "Plasmon," which digested itself and was at the same time agreeable to the taste. Mark Twain became at once the great promoter and business magnate. He invested in Plasmon and brought it to London where he succeeded in obtaining the support of some influential financial houses. At first the headquarters were in a little shop devoid of furniture in Oxford Street near the Marble Arch. Here on many mornings I spent some delightful hours with Mark Twain seated on a box of "Plasmon," the while he regaled us with those quaint, dry, delicious anecdotes which caused us alternately to laugh or wish to cry. The business flourished under more expert hands and moved into proper quarters in the city, and Mark Twain went to it no more, for he hated the city with good cause. He spent the rest of his time in London—before returning in 1900 for good to his beloved Connecticut—in his billiard-room at the house which he had taken in Tedworth Square. There, if you did not mind being cursed for indifferent playing, you could spend a pleasant hour or two listening to the echoes of Huck Finn from his own voice.

The last time I saw the old gentleman was at the Savage Club, which he loved. We began at once to "reminisce"

Procession

about our old printer's devil days. Mark Twain, with a thumb and forefinger firmly holding my coat lapel, said:

"Have I ever told you what I'm going to do when I get to Heaven? There was a dog-goned son-of-a-gun foreman in the *Hannibal Journal* office by the name of Sam Butler. Well, the first thing I shall behold will be that foreman sitting on a silver cloud with a golden lyre on his knee. I shall not hesitate. I shall rush straight at him, pull off his false angel's beard, denounce him in a loud voice as a fraud and a brute and then I'll——"

"Hold on," I said, "you told me this word for word in Hartford fifteen years ago."

"I know," he answered. "I've taught it to myself by heart so that I shall not forget it when I get to Heaven!"



FORTY-SEVEN

Li Hung Chang's Peacocks' Feathers

I HAVE always considered myself to have been more than privileged in having talked with Li Hung Chang, the greatest statesman that China has produced. I look back on the half-hour's informal chat with this soldier-diplomat with extreme satisfaction. His person filled the eye with picturesque effect and his conversation, learned, cynical, shrewd and witty, gave one at once the key to his greatness.

Li Hung Chang sat stiffly on a chair in the Chinese Legation in Portland Place, the historic scene of the kidnapping of Sun Yat Sen the "Liberator," since whose time China has never had an hour's peace. When I was presented to Li Hung Chang it was under the ægis of old Sir Halliday Macartney, at one time a colleague of the mandarin in the Taiping rebellion and later, at the time of the interview, Secretary at the Legation in London. The Macartneys have had some sort of a hand in Chinese affairs for over a hundred years, ever since a cadet of their house went out to emerge eventually as a British Ambassador to the Son of Heaven and to become, for his services, a peer of the realm. Lord Macartney came home after years of office in China, almost more Chinese than the Chinese, and

Procession

he left an unwritten agreement that if possible there should be forever a Macartney somewhere near the Chinese throne. Well, the Manchu emperors have side-stepped for a while, but our friend Mr. Pu Yi in Manchukuo presents a good many reasons for letting us imagine that a "come back" may be staged sooner or later; in which case, *prière, messieurs et mesdames, place aux Macartneys!*

Well, this particular Sir Halliday, who had done all sorts of things in China from Secretary of Legation, army doctor and director of the Imperial Arsenal, came home in the 'seventies completely outfitted with the Grand Cross of the Double Dragon which entitled him almost to address Li Hung Chang as an equal; which is saying a great deal. After that he held a life post at Portland Place to help the learned Ministers along their diplomatic way.

Li Hung Chang, as I say, sat stiffly and gorgeously on a chair. His hands, which I could not see for they were covered by his wide sleeves, rested on his knees. On his head he had a sort of ceremonial cap with a double button on it. He was entitled, owing to his rank and decorations, to no end of many-eyed peacocks' feathers, but on this occasion he refrained from dazzling me with them and did not wear them. His costume was a long heavy silken loose robe, dark wide trousers and Chinese shoes. His face was white, his eyes almost closed, his wisps of hair white, his moustache long, straggling, Chinese. He had a few cavernous spaces in his mouth in lieu of teeth. His age then about seventy. He almost smiled as he bowed and at once he began to interview me. I have elsewhere reported some of this conversation in print; how he asked me in rapid-fire conversation my age, my father's age, my income,



Miss Amelia Earhart being toasted by R.D.B. at the luncheon in honour of her arrival after her famous solo flight from New York, 1933,

Li Hung Chang's Peacocks' Feathers

the number of my children if any, what I ate, what I read and what I wrote. After each answer he would with rapidity throw out some words of wisdom, such as: "Too much income," "Bad habits," "Poor mental diversion," "Not enough children," and so on. I had some difficulty in plying my own questions for he was a most persistent questioner himself, but in the end he subsided and I got in my process of obtaining information.

"I would like to know, my lord," I said, "what were your views of General Gordon who, as you know, was known in this country as 'Chinese' Gordon. You and he quarrelled and I would be so glad if you would tell me why you quarrelled."

The old man looked at me shrewdly and sideways. He shook his head a little and smiled.

"You are a wise young man," he said at last. "You know perfectly well why Gordon and I fell out, but you are pretending not to know, because then you think that I will attempt to trade on your ignorance and so tell you a false version of the affair. No," and here he smiled widely, "no, young man. You are wise, but I am old and also wise. One of the first things I learned at Hanliu University fifty years ago was that it is good to rub and smooth our brain against another's; and I have learned that if one must tell a thing to a wise man one should tell it truthfully or not at all; that is, unless something greater is to be gained otherwise. Now this matter of my friend Gordon. I found it necessary to order the execution of half a dozen rebel princes at Nangkin, and I learned from Gordon that he had promised them their lives. Gordon says I knew of this promise. I will not enter into argument over this.

Procession

I was the Viceroy, and after all, Gordon had no authority to promise them safety. I found it expedient to make them harmless so I executed them."

"Is it true, my lord," I asked as innocently as I could, "that when General Gordon heard that you had executed his prisoners he looked for you with a rifle in his hand and would have shot you if you had not evaded him?"

Li Hung Chang sat up straight and the smile was gone.

"Young man," he said, "you are not as wise as I thought. That story is not as true as you may like to believe. It is true, of course, that Gordon came up to me—no, I'll not go on with that episode. Gordon and I were friends, for many years. He was a gallant, honourable soldier; but he was not Chinese; and besides, he had no such problems to confront him as I had."

So I diverted the conversation to something less controversial, as for instance, European women.

"My experience of them," he said, "has not been very great. But I know all about European women, for I have come in contact with the best specimens (he insisted on using the Chinese equivalent for 'specimen') and I do not think you Europeans have much to complain of. You see, young man, I am once more diplomatic. A woman should never be cunning, because she is always beaten at that game by wiser men. Women in China fit exactly in the scheme of Life, for they understand that their place in the world is to be taken in hand by men. We keep our treasures and our women in our homes. My experience here is that you display not only your treasures for all the world to see but your women as well. That may be good for you but not for us. I read somewhere a translation

Li Hung Chang's Peacocks' Feathers

from an English philosopher who said: 'Most women will forgive an insult but they will not forget a slight.'

"And that, my friend, is the end of our talk. You have come to find out from me what it is we Chinese propose to do about the Japanese war indemnity and its payment. You will not succeed for I do not know. All your other questions to me have been merely blinds. And may your progeny prosper, for after all, I think you are a wise young man."

The old tyrant actually stood up, folded his hands in his sleeves, smiled sideways and bowed me out. Sir Halliday said, as I went out: "You've made a hit!"



FORTY-EIGHT

Pavlova, A Poem on Foot

ANNA PAVLOVA was an astonishing artist. There have, of course, been many ballet dancers who had as much technique, as much skill and as much alertness as little Pavlova, but none had the like of her personality. After all, Personality is the thing that makes all the difference between good and super-good. Personality is not confined to animate things. I always remember what Victor Hugo said to illustrate this point:

"Inanimate objects sometimes appear endowed with a strange power of sight. A statue notices, a tower watches, the face of an edifice contemplates."

Personality is an indefinable quality. You have it or you have not. I suppose every man and woman has it concealed somewhere within and that it may be induced here and there to disclose itself; or perhaps not. We constantly see advertisements of ingenious teachers who, of course, have Personality and who know they have it, offering to produce this heaven-sent gift in others.

"Develop your Personality," they urge. "Be something! Learn how to capitalise your Personality," and so on.

There must be something in it, for this divine attribute shows itself in unexpected places and in unexpected people. Those who get on in the world and remain "on," un-

Procession

doubtedly owe much of their progress to the possession of Personality; Cleopatra must have had a good deal of it; and Julius Cæsar and Attila and Jabez Balfour and Horatio Nelson, as well as Horatio Bottomley. Will anyone deny Lloyd George's gift of Personality or the Prince of Wales'? Casanova and his friend Cagliostro traded on it; Nell Gwyn had it and so has Marie Tempest. In fact one has only to point to great artists, great musicians, great soldiers and great statesmen to prove that but for their personality they would probably never have raised themselves above the level of mediocrity.

So we come back to Pavlova. It was Mostyn Pigott, the prince of *raconteurs*, who asked me far away back in 1910 to come to lunch at the Café Royal to meet Madame Pavlova, "a young Russian ballet dancer, who, I think, will make as great a success here as she has in her native country."

I was not particularly anxious to meet a potential success on the ballet stage, and so I telephoned to Mr. Pigott that I preferred not to go; and knowing him well enough I expressed the fear that it looked to me like a press agent's snare. He came down to see me and assured me to the contrary. I was to be the only editor in the party. The others were to be Beerbohm Tree, Norman Forbes Robertson, Arthur Collins, Ellen Terry, Charles Frohman, Weedon Grossmith, Gilbert Parker, Charles Wyndham, Mary Moore and one or two others. So, feeling safe in such distinguished company, I went to the Café Royal, which boasted the best cuisine and the best wines in Europe. There, in one of the dining-rooms upstairs, we were presented to a little group of Russians, Madame Pavlova, her manager, her dancing partner, Mordkin, and another.

Pavlova, A Poem on Foot

Pavlova was a little, simply dressed, diffident-looking person, markedly foreign in dress and looks. I do not remember now if she spoke English or French. It was one or the other in broken accents. Mordkin, who afterwards became famous, said nothing.

Beerbohm Tree was put on her right at table and I sat on her left. In two minutes I succumbed to the charm of a personality that combined all the qualities of simplicity, beauty of mind, intelligence and character. This was in 1910 and so she was just twenty-five years of age. She told me that she had even then been dancing for fifteen years, for she was ten years of age when she was sent to the Imperial Ballet School at the Marinski Theatre of her native St. Petersburg, where eventually she became *prima ballerina*. They paid great attention to the ballet in Czarist days and little Pavlova was so intensively trained in detail that by the time she had reached the front of the class she was the most graceful, the most rhythmic and the most fascinating dancer in all Russia; which meant so much that they promoted her to the Imperial Opera House; and there her reputation was made.

But all this time, while Russian royalty and Russian aristocracy were applauding and rewarding Anna Pavlova, we here in barbaric England knew nothing of her accomplishments. That is one of the reasons why I, for one, had some diffidence in going to a luncheon for an unknown artist. Press agents had a habit of making them known by medium of the luncheon table. Beerbohm Tree, of course, told me that he had known all about her accomplishments, and Charles Frohman said he knew because it was his business to know, although he placed small

Procession

faith in the efficacy of dancing as dancing for box-office purposes.

The little dancer told me that she proposed to appear at the Palace Theatre in "Le Cygne" and "Les Papillons," two of her subsequent great successes, and it meant little to me to know this. All I was aware of was the presence of a most fetching little Personality.

Later, when I was proposing to leave the room owing to pressing business, Pavlova said to me:

"Would you like my photograph? Would you honour me by accepting one from me?"

"By all means," I replied. "I should be delighted," etc.

Thereupon she rose, went to a chair in a corner and picked up a huge photograph a couple of feet long and handed it to me. It had scrawled across the foot the name "Anna Pavlova" in huge letters, an inch high. I loaded myself with this token from genius to mediocrity. Outside in Regent Street I hailed a cab. I placed Pavlova on the seat beside me—and there I left her. In Fleet Street the cabman called after me:

"Hi, sir! You've left something in the cab."

I shook my head and said:

"No. Not mine!"

And so Pavlova's portrait, which then meant nothing, went off into the *Ewigkeit*. Six weeks later the "fans" would have committed crime for its possession.



FORTY-NINE

The Ironmaster

ANDREW CARNEGIE was a many-sided man with a single-track mind. This apparent contradiction in terms can only be explained in the equally contradictory manner of saying that he was an unusual person. I had many occasions of meeting him and talking with him, and our conversation was perhaps a little wider ranged than it would ordinarily have been for the further nebulous reason that, like Edison, we had once belonged to the early Morse code hand-sending, sound-hearing telegraph profession, now moribund. There was a delightful *camaraderie* among the Morse operators of the Age that has gone into the *Ewigkeit*, and though I was nearly thirty years the junior of Mr. Carnegie, he was always ready to drop what he had to do, and give up an hour or so for a "crack" with me on our favourite subject.

"Do you remember that story," he would say, "about George Kennan, the explorer-writer who had an antipathy to a man named Healey in the old telegraph office where he and Kennan and Edison worked? Edison had rigged up a contraption with wires which if brought within six inches of each other reproduced a long flash. It was while he was experimenting with electric light. At such a time no batteries and no wires were sacred to him. In the course of this play work, Edison used to amuse himself with the electrocution of the many cockroaches that happened to

Procession

amble along the top of his desk. He was having a perfect *battue* of the dreadful things, when Kennan came along and said: "Don't kill those cockroaches, Tom. They are the things that eat up Healey's carpets!"

This little old-time anecdote used to give Mr. Carnegie untold pleasure. Always when we met, he would ask me if I knew it, and always untruthfully I would profess ignorance of the story that proved how deeply George Kennan could feel about other men whom he did not like. Kennan was the man who went across Siberia on foot from Moscow to the Pacific to describe the Russian convict system. His exposure of the hardships endured in these convoys did much to bring about an amelioration.

But it is about Mr. Carnegie that I wish to write. He, with his direct, single-track mind would never have approved of the diffuseness I have shown in the writing of these sketches. As long ago as 1886, after Carnegie had established himself as one of the great men of affairs in still-developing America, when he wrote *Triumphant Democracy*, he bemoaned the fact that his early years of poverty had deprived him of the great privilege of educating his mind, not in the ways of business, which came to him naturally, but in the classics, knowledge of the arts and of literature. He could express himself in good English but, as he often told me, he could think only with his "elemental mind," and not with one that had been trained with the proper and priceless infusion of classical knowledge. My usual retort was that he had a far better equipment than most men who had been carefully tutored at private schools and universities. But he would not agree.

"Everybody in the English-speaking world," he would

The Ironmaster

say, "should have the same opportunities for mind improvement. The great thing in life is reading. The more you read the more you know. The more you know the more worth-while you are to know," and so on. Ever and ever he harped on this subject. He had already begun the astonishing system of chain libraries like chain stores. All you had to do in your English-speaking community, whether in America, in England, or wherever English was spoken or read, was to apply for a grant. You had to maintain the establishment, the Fund would do the rest; and in this manner by the end of the War he had erected nearly three thousand library buildings.

"I want to see the time," said Mr. Carnegie, "when every little town of a few thousand people has its library where all may read and benefit therefrom without cost to themselves."

When he wrote the *Gospel of Wealth*, he laid down his idea of how to dispose of one's money in these terms: "The duty of the man of wealth: To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer."

So he founded Trusts in accordance with his creed, no end of benefactions for human advancement, millions upon millions of pounds, Hero funds, Peace funds, Teaching funds, Art funds and so on. It is one of the wonders of the present time, this Carnegie business of ladling out money almost in bulk for the advancement of the things that the projector of these schemes had in mind. Naturally, he had

Procession

not the least idea at the beginning where all this would lead. He knew, of course, the value of money for propaganda purposes, and he was reconciled in the thought that perhaps here and there the millions would be inadvertently applied without beneficial results. "But," he used to say, "you have to speculate in these matters and trust to luck." So far there does not seem to have been much haphazard work about the application of these millions, for it is generally acknowledged that the Carnegie funds are managed in the most efficient manner that is conceivably possible.

The old gentleman was fond of seeing the justification of his plans. He would never have been the phenomenally successful millionaire, if he had not been a good business man. I imagine a good deal of his business acumen was sharpened by his early experience as a money-saver in small things. The big things in life never worried him half so much as the little ones.

He had bought Skibo Castle in Scotland, when he was proposing to make something of a shine in his native country. It was really his native country, but he had left it when he was about twelve so that he knew little about it. But all his life, even after he had become rich and had driven a four-in-hand round and across the banks and braes, he yearned to go back "an' wear a pair o' kelts jis like the Scots themselves." We were discussing what was to be done at Skibo one day when he was in London, and we walked down Piccadilly to Regent Street. I was on my way to a silversmith's shop for the purpose of buying a piece of silver which was intended to be sent to a couple of friends who were about to celebrate their silver wedding.

"I'll come in with you," said Mr. Carnegie. He was

The Ironmaster

interested in my choice, a rose-bowl for which I paid twelve pounds. As we came out in the street, the great steel king, the second or third richest man in the world, said, "I wonder you didn't tell the assistant that twelve pounds was too much for that bowl."

"I did not think it was," I said.

"Yes, I know," he replied, "but I should rather have thought that you would have indicated something lower."

"But," I retorted, "this isn't a Cairo bazaar. It is a great silversmith's shop where one doesn't haggle."

"It is obvious," he retorted, with a superior smile, "that you do not know how to shop even in London."

Then we went down St. James's Street to a great wine merchant's place. He put his head in at the door and said casually: "Would you mind sending me a couple of thousand Havana cigars of a good brand. Thank you."

As we came out, I said: "Now, Mr. Carnegie, how much are you going to pay for those cigars?"

"I do not know," he replied. "They will send me in the bill in due course."

"Yes," I said, unwilling to let the opportunity slip by, "it is obvious to me that you do not know how to shop even in London."

"But, my dear sir," he replied, "this is a wholesale transaction. Yours was retail!"

I could never see what he meant by that.



FIFTY

Follow my Leader Horne

ONCE during the War I saw a stranger enter the dining-room of my club. It is the sort of old-fashioned institution where every unfamiliar face rouses at once the latent antagonisms which are harboured in every human breast, and causes members to turn to their next-door neighbour with the query, "Now who the devil can he be?" I remember in particular that the new-comer of whom I am writing had a reddish head and a reddish face, unmistakably Scottish in its ruggedness, and a twinkle in his een, as befits the invader from over the border. This one had on a colonel's uniform, and it was worn so flagrantly in contradiction to all the rules of sartorial militarism that even the veriest tyro could observe that no admiring gods had ever fashioned for him either an Excalibur or a claymore. His weapons were the pen or words.

We soon learned that his name was Horne, prefix Robert, and that he had been "interpolated" from Scotland by Sir Eric Geddes, as assistant-inspector-general of transportation. You may remember that these jobs required uniforms above all things. Indeed, I recall seeing Sir Eric one day in the uniform of an admiral of the something or other and next as a full-rigged major-general; so that it was quite reasonable to see Mr. Robert Horne in the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel.

Procession

Well, he did this transportation job so effectively that he soon transported himself higher and higher; into the Labour Department as a Minister and an M.P., and finally into the Treasury as a highly successful Chancellor in the Lloyd George Coalition Government.

It may not be amiss here to state that Horne was about to go to the United States to negotiate the War Debt settlement, but the fall of the Coalition altered that; wherefore most of us on both sides of the Atlantic have cause for grief. We all feel that a Horne settlement would have altered the world's history. But that is merely opinion.

This man, Sir Robert Horne, K.C., G.B.E., a red-headed boy from a Stirlingshire manse, with not a bawbee in his pouch, comes up to London, knows only Eric Geddes at first, and then hour by hour, day by day, adds social, political and financial scalps to his belt until within a few years he has become not only an elder statesman, but a world-famed financier and wit. More, he could have been Prime Minister for the lifting of a finger.

A few years ago the usual B.M.G. (Balfour Must Go, Baldwin Must Go) fever coursed through the Conservative Party veins. Baldwin was to go on the carpet. The stage was set for a sweeping movement in which Mr. Baldwin was inevitably to be relegated to a contemplative seat under his Worcestershire apple trees. There was only one logical successor and that was Sir Robert Horne. There was to be a party meeting at Caxton Hall. The stage was set. We, behind the scenes, began to nominate our favourites to shadow Cabinet posts. Baldwin had about as much chance of escape from reduction to the ranks as

Follow my Leader Horne

Mr. J. H. Thomas has of being elected to the Trade Union Council. It was a certainty for Horne.

I went to the club that night after dinner. By what is called a fortuitous circumstance, I saw Sir Robert in the lounge. We talked about the next day's meeting and naturally I said that his course was clear.

"All you have to do," I said, fully seized with my political foresight, "all you will have to do is to make one of your stirring little speeches. Then at the end of your peroration, you will seize the baby, metaphorically speaking, and walk out of the hall with it. Ninety per cent of the meeting will cheer you and will follow you out, and there you are—the King will send for you as soon as possible."

Sir Robert, who has most humorous and kindly eyes, smiled back at me. I thought I detected a glint of triumph in them, and I went home quite assured that we were to have a new leader.

At the Caxton Hall the next day the revolt against Baldwin was dispelled by an impassioned appeal from Sir Robert Horne.

I shall never again ask him to be a leader of the Conservative Party.



FIFTY-ONE

"Jix"

"WHEN a man has achieved a national nickname he has acquired much more than a Garter or a baronetcy or a peerage. A man may have a Garter and be unknown to the world; but to win a soubriquet by which everyone from Land's End to John o' Groats knows you, is to be famous."

I copied this interesting thought some time ago from a reference to my late friend—our late friend—Lord Brentford, who was better and more affectionately known as "Jix." I had begun my little homily on this truly British statesman and had reached the end of the quotation above without, however, adding its source, for I was interrupted, and put the paper as well as the reference aside. Now, after a lapse of weeks, I am confronted with the quotation, but for the life of me I cannot remember its origin; and so I must content myself with offering sincere apologies to its author with the further excuse that the reference is so apt that I cannot refrain from purloining it.

I had my first disagreement with Joynson-Hicks as long ago as 1907 when he stood for North-West Manchester as a Unionist candidate against Mr. Winston Churchill, who had just been appointed President of the Board of Trade in a reconstructed Liberal Ministry, following the resignation of the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Our Winston was then, as he is now, a

Procession

formidable opponent. He had won the North-West Manchester seat by what in those days was considered a large majority—over twelve hundred. Manchester was the citadel of Free Trade. It was even then termed by Sir Arthur Michael Samuel “the most foreign city imaginable,” and the Churchill influence was great, whereas Joynson-Hicks was “just a solicitor.”

It was a strange election and both sides were hedging. Churchill got the support of a large number of Conservative free traders because they were afraid that Joynson-Hicks was a tariffite, and yet “Jix” wobbled terribly on that point. I tried hard to induce him to come out definitely as a tariff reformer; asked him to make an unequivocal avowal and thus secure a great victory for the Chamberlain cause. He refused; hedged magnificently; said tariffs were all right in their place and at the proper time and all that sort of thing, but they were not an issue in this particular fight and were, therefore, not to be discussed in detail. So the *Daily Express* labelled the Conservative candidate as a “Mugwump” which, in its properly accepted form is to be taken as meaning that he was sitting on the fence. I repeated this a number of times and then advised the Conservatives of Manchester either to secure from Joynson-Hicks a tariff pledge or else abstain from voting. “Jix” came up, like the fighting man he was, and said he would not be dictated to, and he sent me a telegram from Manchester which surprised me, for I never suspected that I should be the recipient of a message written on His Majesty’s stationery and transmitted over His Majesty’s telegraph lines, a message inviting me to take myself straight to Hell, signed W. Joynson-Hicks.

"Jix"

Anyhow, in spite of us, "Jix" won a memorable victory. It was his third attempt and he deserved success. And Winston Churchill went to Dundee. . . . My friend and colleague Mr. H. A. Taylor, who has written a most admirable Life of the late Lord Brentford, quotes him as making a wise statement long after this Manchester contest, when he had reached an age and a state of grace which qualified him to give advice to young politicians.

Lord Brentford wrote: "It is a mistake to win a spectacular by-election. . . . I am afraid that I thought I was a much more important person than I really was."

It took him a long time to make this discovery, and even to the end he never fully grasped the full realisation of the true philosophy of life which places such small valuation on individuals.

"Jix" believed in himself as much as many others believed in him. Few men have been nearer the realisation of the highest posts than this active, energetic, earnest and lovable man.

So then in due course—years later, in 1922 to be exact—his chance came and he nearly lost it because he believed too much in himself. I was in our mutual club on the Sunday afternoon following the deposition of Lloyd George from the Coalition Government and the rise of Bonar Law. It was late in October. "Jix" sat gloomily in a corner over a cup of tea.

"What's wrong, 'Jix'?" I asked. "You look unhappy. Has Bonar refused to make you Archbishop of Canterbury?" I knew, of course, that he was expecting office, and since there were many claimants, his share would not be great.

Procession

"Worse," said "Jix." "He has offered me the Overseas Trade office-boy job under Philip Lloyd-Graeme (now Cunliffe-Lister) at the Board of Trade. Think of that! I'm old enough nearly to be Philip's father. I have told Bonar that I do not think it is fair. Bonar says I shall have the Post Office soon if I behave myself. But what's that to me? I think I shall go home to Norfolk to-night and just throw it all overboard. This is what I get for all my hard work!"

He looked, as he was, dejected in the extreme, and he went home to Norfolk and talked it over with his wife, and they slept on it for a day and then accepted the Under-Secretaryship. Hence Postmaster-General and Paymaster-General, Financial Secretary to the Treasury with Cabinet rank under Mr. Baldwin, Minister of Health and Home Secretary.

Here he let himself go. He was reputed to be the father of D.O.R.A. (Defence of the Realm Act) though this was not true; he was blamed and praised alike for his activities in the Prayer Book controversy; he was accused of setting himself up as a censor of morals; he was said to be the enemy of night clubs, which he was not; though he quite properly made war on most of them; he turned safe-breaker by raiding the offices of Arcos, the Russian trade agency in Moorgate Street, and he wrote me a letter on that day asking me to "Come and see me some time," and he would show me something to convince me that I had always been wrong about Russian propaganda in this country; and finally he invested the office of Home Secretary with all the dramatic attractions that he put into everything he ever did.

“Jix”

I have often felt that if Joynson-Hicks had been lucky enough, not had so many snares of Fate to unravel, and had been made Prime Minister in his time, he would have got the country ahead just a bit more. He had courage far beyond the average; he had energy and initiative; he had a sense of humour which never failed him in times of extremity; he was vain enough always to keep himself going at the right *tempo*; he was patriotic, God-fearing and loyal. He served his country well and faithfully, and though we often disagreed I am glad to be able to call him my friend.

As a postscript I would like to say that since writing the above I have discovered the author of the passage quoted at the beginning of this sketch. The writer is Mr. A. G. Gardiner, the distinguished journalist and essayist who has for so many years had a monopoly of graceful as well as vitriolic expression.

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FIFTY-TWO

Mr. Britling's Wells

ALWAYS when I am abroad I gather credit and distinction from a proudly made assertion that I know Mr. H. G. Wells. I suppose I may as well make public admission here that I have frequently used the fact that I may, without stretching things, go so far as to address Mr. Wells as "Dear H. G." which is equivalent to the German "Du" and the French "tu," and that in the past quarter of a century, during a large portion of which we were constantly and intimately thrown together, I have become qualified to sit in kindly judgment on one of the outstanding literary figures of the time.

Mr. Wells can be bitingly sarcastic at times with doubtful compliments. The memory of my first meeting with him many years ago is enhanced by the fact that I feared he was going to throw at me his characteristic verbal hand-grenades across a long dinner table at one of the famous Whitefriars Club discussions at Anderton's Hotel in Fleet Street. I had essayed to take up an anti-Socialist argument as the *leit-motif* of my opening. Mr. Wells was then in the full flavour of the Fabian Society "permeation" programme. He and Shaw with Ramsay MacDonald and Father Adderley were employing involved rhetoric and rich-sounding Marxian phraseology in their efforts to prove that their form of Socialism was the only panacea

Procession

for the world's imagined ills. I had seen Mr. Wells many times and admired his *Kips* and *Tono Bungay* and his *Invisible Man*, but I had never heard him speak.

The late Sir Gilbert Parker sat beside me. He said by way of egging me on to my fate that if I could only aggravate Wells enough I would rouse him to speak as he writes, "and then," he said, "you will be reminded of Demosthenes and Cicero and Gladstone and Patrick Henry, to say nothing of my own countryman, Sir John A. MacDonald." Thus encouraged I proceeded to stir up the fires that were supposed to lie aslumber in the asbestos bosom of Mr. Wells, and I launched forth in a soaring attack on Fabianism, Marxism and Socialism in general, and not at all displeased at the end of it with my oratorical effort.

Mr. Wells got up. I was never more disappointed. I had expected to hear the resonant full-tongued thunders of a Roman senator all aglow with fervour and throbbing with the grandeur of enthusiasm. Instead, there came forth the shy, diffident, sibilant tones of the pedant, the form master. He lectured me and my audience. He dismissed my crudities with a few, as I thought, withering and ill-chosen sentences. Then he ended his remarks without paying any further attention to the matter in hand. From that moment I was more than ever convinced of Mr. Wells's greatness as a writer and thinker, but I was equally certain that the silver tongue was never vouchsafed to him at his birth. That is, for public-speaking purposes, but not in private. I ask for nothing more interesting and educative than to be put into an arm-chair opposite H. G. anywhere or any when, as he calls it, and

Mr. Britling's Wells

let him dilate, orate, dictate, expatiate or adumbrate on any or all subjects. He is at once the wisest, the most concise as well as the most diffuse of conversationalists. He is extremely good-natured when he knows that he is not on exhibition, and for a really great man he is inordinately modest. I feel myself justified in describing him as one of the greatest writers of our time, and yet I have never heard H. G. utter even the simplest of boasts; which in itself is a sign of greatness.

I nearly succeeded in inducing Mr. Wells to become another Cincinnatus by turning him into a countryman, but it did not last more than a dozen years or so, and now he has again become a townsman revelling in the echo of his footsteps on the city pavements. I wonder if "Mr. Britling" would ever have appeared if H. G. had not been induced to become one of our colony in the pleasant Dunmow district which his presence afterwards made so famous, that American pilgrims divided their time between visiting the Washington Manor at Sulgrave, Anne Hathaway's Cottage at Stratford, the Cheshire Cheese in London, and Wells's "The Glebe" at Little Easton. They used to contribute a considerable revenue to the coffers of the old Great Eastern Railway where they got off the ancient train at Easton Lodge Station and at once became involved in conversation with the antique stationmaster who could tell you at what time Mr. Wells had his breakfast, at what hour he sat down to lunch, when the famous floor game opened proceedings in the schoolroom with authentic Cabinet Ministers, generals, admirals, writers, actors—"Lor', sir, they all come 'ere to Easton to see Mr. Wells," and all the other minutiae of details concerning the great

Procession

man. Some of this talk went into the fascinating chapters of *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* so effectively, that a hundred years from now our descendants will be reading this book to obtain a glance of England at home at the beginning of the great World War. I have not read anything—nor has any of us—that so clearly portrays our state as the various chapters of this wonderful book.

I went into a shop in Dunmow one morning to have a little chat with an old crony with whom for thirty years or more I have exchanged opinions. He represents to me more eloquently than almost anyone I know, the strength, the virtues, the limitations and the common sense of the English, the best-balanced people in the world. His outlook on life is exactly the same as it was when I first met him. "God Save the King," of course, first, last and for all time. Foreigners? Away with 'em. Germans? . . . Just a rather disdainful shrug of the shoulders. Frenchmen? Well, all right now, but still foreigners. Americans? Just like Canadians and Australians; sort of youngsters that need telling off now and then. Bolshevism, Fascism, Marxism, any kind of *ism*—even Buchmannism if he had heard of it—not worth considering these days. In other words a true-blue Tory with Radical tendencies such as all Tories have with utter inconsistency.

"Tell me," said my old shop crony, "what's become o' that there Mister Wells that used to live up at the Glebe out Easton way? I ain't heard nothin' about him for a long time. The last I see of him was he'd a'gone to Russia to see those Bolshies and I doubt he ain't had much o' that. He used to be a regular customer o' mine in those days and always had a good word to say about all sorts o' people

Mr. Britling's Wells

that I couldn't abide, and once he came in here and told me that he'd been a boy in a shop, something like Bradley's along 'ere and had served behind the counter. Of course I put on a real old-fashioned face when he told me that and I made believe I accepted all he said for Gospel truth; but when he'd a'gone I turns to my wife and sez, 'D'ye hear wot that story-writer told me?' 'E'd been a boy in a draper's shop,' and I sez to my wife, 'Yes, 'e can jes go and tell that to the Maroons.'"



FIFTY-THREE

“*The Sorrows of Satan*”

I WENT one day to the Tabernacle, on the Surrey side, where the famous Mr. Spurgeon drew to him, by reason of his eloquence, the thousands of people who would otherwise not have gone to a place of worship. Mr. Spurgeon was always worth hearing. He had a sonorous voice full of fire and passion or quivering with pathos. He had imagery and mimicry and humour. In fact, he was all that a popular preacher should be—and a little more. I used to go there frequently for I felt I could always come away from his dissertation with something to think about.

On this particular occasion the preacher chose for his subject the wickedness of selfishness and he quoted a novel which at that moment was being discussed everywhere. Its title was *The Sorrows of Satan* and the author was Marie Corelli. It would, of course, be no reflection on the intelligence of a present-day reader if he or she were to confess ignorance as to the why and wherefore of Marie Corelli, for so fleeting are reputations in these whirling years and so many are the reputations to be considered that it seems only natural that Marie Corelli should be forgotten in company with the other battalions of celebrities who swept across the stage when the world was different only a few years ago.

Procession

But when Mr. Spurgeon spoke of *The Sorrows of Satan* and drew a moral from it; and when Mr. Spurgeon spoke with undoubted respect and admiration for Marie Corelli he was merely following the fashion of the moment. Indeed, I might say that he was echoing the critical pronouncements that were made from time to time by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, who found in Marie Corelli an agent for the expression of her own literary mind. It should be remembered by all of the present worldly-minded young folk that Queen Victoria gave the tone to the literature of her circle and that Marie Corelli arrived just in time to be made famous.

She was no Marie Bashkirtcheff. She was no feminine Admirable Crichton. She was just a simple, single-tracked, fair-haired bordering on straw-colour, English young woman, with ideas that ran concurrently with tight stays, tailor-made clothes, high choky collars and boater hats. To smoke a cigarette would have been a sin; to talk slang, worse; to say "damn" impossible and to mention what is called "sex stuff" beyond her capacity to understand.

So then, picture yourself this paragon of literary virtue being acclaimed not only by the wise and all-powerful Sovereign at Windsor, but also extolled by the great preacher at the Tabernacle; by Father Vaughan in Farm Street; by the powerful Mr. Stevens, the Editor of the *Family Herald*, and by all the future countesses in the third row of Mr. Hollingshead's Gaiety chorus.

The next day I went to lunch with Mrs. Postlethwaite, one of the early women journalists, who lived in Upper Baker Street in the house once occupied by Mrs. Siddons. There I met a demure young woman with straw-coloured hair

The Sorrows of Satan

and her name was Marie Corelli. She had come there with her step-brother, Eric Mackay, who was also her guardian.

I have always maintained that if one wishes to retain one's preconceived notions of great people whose personality is unfamiliar one should avoid meeting them, because in almost every instance the ideal goes to pieces. Even stage folk, bereft of their paint and pomatum, their ruffles and their flounces, come crashing to the ground when they have to compete with ordinary people in ordinary surroundings.

I confess that on this day when I first met Marie Corelli who forty years ago was a national figure competing for publicity honours with the Prince of Wales and Gladstone and Ellen Terry, I experienced a feeling of sadness. This little woman could never have projected on the screen of life anything so powerful—as we thought then—as the big figures in *The Romance of Two Worlds*, *Thelma*, and *Barabbas*.

After a while, however, I discerned that Marie Corelli had a definite mind. She made many strong, controversial points in her conversation. She showed that she preferred argument to flattery. She contradicted; she expostulated and she said some most preposterous things; so that when I left Mrs. Postlethwaite's hospitable table I felt that I had received a great deal of stimulus besides mere meat and drink.

After that I was made a confidant in many if not all of her crusades. She was a fighting woman and as her literary vogue waned with the fashion, her desire for pugnacity increased.

She removed to Stratford-on-Avon, and adopted the

Procession

town. It was pitch and toss for a while whether Shakespeare or Corelli should prevail. Once or twice she nearly won! She picked out some stout opponents and quarrelled with them. She was not afraid of the law courts. She wrote me letters which could not be published; or rather if they had been published would have enriched her opponents for she was an expert at written invective and sometimes invective is libellous and likely to be costly.

I can quote a few passages from fairly innocuous letters, thus:

"I only quoted what suited my purpose. But the continuance of such snuffle-snuffle *bigotry* among British 'pious'-folk who think *they* only understand the 'Word of God' is *amazing*."

"How really *blasphemous* it is to suppose the Almighty discussing a meat ration!"

"Maybe he (mine ancient enemy) is *behind* the spiteful prosecution. He never forgives my victory over him."

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"Nothing will be done till that German influence is extirpated out of the House of Commons—or till Lloyd George escapes from the snare set for him in order to bring about his downfall. What a pity it all is!!"

All this was during the War when people were naturally more or less excitable.

There was a grand time at Stratford when Marie Corelli

The Sorrows of Satan

came in conflict with the Food Controller and had to go to law. She lost and cried out indignantly against the injustice of the judges.

One evening she came to town and called at my office. Outside she had a large horse-drawn lorry. It was full of clothes that she had collected. She had heard of some havoc in an air-raid. Rumour had told her that the victims had no clothes; so within twenty-four hours there she was, the good Samaritan all the way from Stratford-on-Avon, trying to do some good. It was rather an eloquent retort to the charge that she had been contravening the law with a pound of sugar.



FIFTY-FOUR

The Maxim Quick-Firer

"INVENTION," said old Hiram Maxim, as he inhaled slowly from his self-made atomiser—"invention," he said, "is just one of those things that you have to keep on inventing about. Anyone can be an inventor but it isn't everyone who invents anything worth thinking about twice. Now, look at this atomiser. True, it is a trifle bulky and it is breakable and you can't carry it about in your waistcoat pocket, but it is a wonderful thing. It saves life and, believe me, anything that saves life is worth striving for."

"What!" I cried, "you the inventor of the deadliest gun that has ever been known; you who made it possible to lay out stark and cold dozens of soldiers with one shot and each shot fired in rapid succession, you talk about saving life?"

Sir Hiram Maxim was very deaf. He could be hopelessly deaf when he wanted not to hear, and this time he did not hear me.

"Yes," he continued, "inventors good and bad have always been honoured. I have had my share; and I think I have been a pretty good inventor too. What was it that Bacon said about it?"

Here Sir Hiram pulled out an old pocket-book, fumbled with it for a time and then—"Here it is. Listen and don't interrupt, for I heard what you said about me and

Procession

my Maxim quick-firer and its life-destroying qualities. Here now is Bacon on inventors."

Then in a sing-song voice the old gentleman read out slowly:

"Founders and senators of states and cities, lawgivers, extirpaters of tyrants, fathers of the people, and other eminent persons in civil government were honoured, but with titles of worthies or of demi-gods; whereas such as were inventors and authors of new arts, endowments and other commodities towards man's life were even consecrated among the gods themselves."

That, the old inventor said, was sufficient honour for him. I used to meet him occasionally and we would chat for an hour or so on all the subjects known and unknown. He had the most astonishing mind. It was crystal clear and inquiring; choked with information and misinformation; bemused with things that he had picked up somewhere in his early readings and had never been able to get them out of his system. He was a scientist, a scholar, a necromancer, a romancer, a realist, a controversialist, an irritable, irritating sweet-minded peasant with a professional complex. His mathematical brain took in everything, appraised it, dissected it, and then retained it seemingly because he was one of those rare human freaks who could make something interesting of anything that came his way. He invented in thoughts, like explosions in torrents of ideas, instantly to be shoved aside.

It was at some time during the Boer War that Maxim, then plain Mister Maxim of the U.S.A., came to see me one afternoon at the *Daily Mail* office, where I was installed for a brief and interesting period as an executive in the

The Maxim Quick-Firer

Editorial department. It was in the salad days of the paper, not long after its birth and editors of the popular Press were naturally more accessible than they are now; for the public of thirty years ago was not so press-minded as it is to-day, and every other man in the country did not then feel that he had a prescriptive right either to go and see his favourite newspaper's editor or in any case write and tell him what to do. If editors had now in person to see every caller they would require a sixty-hour day without meals in order to gratify even a part of the number.

Well, my Mr. Maxim came ostensibly to make a suggestion about something that we had printed with reference to the Vickers-Maxim guns that were at the moment making havoc as well as history in South Africa. It is strange not to think of the potent name of Maxim when almost every grown-up person in the world spoke constantly about the performances of that wonderful rapid-fire Maxim cannon or of the rattle of the little machine-gun which altered all methods of warfare. Talk to-day to a young man of thirty about the Vickers-Maxim and he may be excused if he thinks it is a radio machine. But in those days Hiram Maxim was one of the world's wonders.

He came, as I say, to make a suggestion. I thought it was to be about his guns. Instead he pushed my door open and keeping his hat on his great leonine head and not saying "good day" or wasting time on preliminaries, said:

"Say, boy. I've got an idea. T'wont cost you a cent. I've got it all pat. Why don't you print colours in the *Daily Mail*?"

I replied that the presses ran too fast, twenty to thirty

Procession

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Then in a sing-song voice the old gentleman read out slowly:

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I replied that the presses ran too fast, twenty to thirty

thousand copies per hour, to permit the superimposition of colour; that engineers had been working on the problem but so far had failed, and so on; the usual "stall."

"Engineers be blowed," wheezed Maxim, "they aren't the fellows to do it. What you need is ingenuity; not engineering. I've got it all pat, I tell you. Just add another deck to your Hoe or Goss press, reduce speed a trifle and you've got it."

"Well," I said, "that's a good idea. Why don't you perfect it?"

"Haven't got time. I am too busy with my flying machine. I'm going to make that young chap Santos Dumont look like nothing. He's on the right idea but he'll not do it. I tell you the time will soon be here when you will laugh at railway trains; and as for these new automobiles they will never be more than toys. On the other hand, the flying machine is the thing. I have spent up to now over £17,000 but no sooner does the durned thing rise than it falls down again. Yet, you'll live to see the air full of Maxim's flying hornets and also they'll put an end in war-time to any enemy that crawls."

I referred to Count Zeppelin and his proposed gas-filled dirigibles.

"Bosh!" he said. "Never! Besides, Zeppelin doesn't know how. He's not an inventor."

Then turning back suddenly he said: "Now about this printing business. I saw in a printing place the other day half a dozen men standing round a crude metal pot in which they were making curved type plates for printing machines. Why not do this by machinery, half a dozen or more plates at a time?"

The Maxim Quick-Firer

I had not then heard of any proposal to apply the now universally used autotype for stereotyping purposes. The invention was indeed born and perfected in the mind of an American named Wise-Wood at about the same time. There could not have been many months either way between Wood's and Maxim's idea. It struck me at once as a valuable suggestion and I expressed myself enthusiastically.

"Well, now, that is a good one. If you can put that idea into practice you will work wonders."

"Yes, I know," said Maxim, "I know, but you see I haven't got time. I've got an idea about a smokeless powder that I want to put out first; and then there is a thing called another explosive that I want to work on. You see I've got a gold-durned brother, my brother, Ike Maxim who calls himself Hudson Maxim so that he may be the better mistaken for H. Maxim—that's me. Unfortunately, we had the same Pa and Ma over in Maine but that's all. The only thing he ever invented was a powder which was so inventive that it blew his arm off; and I'm busy now trying to perfect a powder which don't blow off arms, just to show how ornery that brother of mine, that Ike, who calls himself Hudson, really is."

"And by the way, why do you people in newspaper offices persist in setting display type by hand? You are setting ordinary news items by machine; why not display type?"

"The machine would be too large," said I, in my unmechanical innocence.

"You talk like a professor," said the inventor. "I could apply the principle to the linotype machine and make it doubly, trebly valuable."

Procession

This idea had so far baulked and baffled all the other experts throughout the world. It is now in full blast everywhere. I said to Mr. Maxim:

"There you are again. Another wonderful idea. Go to it and make a million!"

"Haven't got time," he said. "First I want to show some of these fellows that the Germans aren't the only people in the world that can produce dye-stuffs. Why, man, you've got all the materials in this country. Lister gave you all the secrets. Why in the name of Jehosophat (that was Maxim's wildest New England swear word), why in the name of Jehosophat can't we do it here? If they won't, I will—but first let me tell you about that feller Ike, my brother Hudson—who isn't an inventor at all. . . ."



FIFTY-FIVE

A Box of Old Letters

MANY years ago I came to the momentous conclusion that I would adopt a business-like method in connection with personal correspondence. If, I considered, it is good to file all business letters for future reference, why should it not be equally useful to adopt a similar method with letters of a personal nature, provided they are worth keeping? So I secured a great assortment of alphabetical filing cabinets and into them, carefully scrutinised, went the contents of a couple of huge boxes, the flotsam and jetsam of years upon years of missives from all kinds of people, statesmen, authors, artists, scientists and even murderers. The contents of an autograph collector's box is not restricted in the matter of social degree.

The result was a prim and useful reference department covering a score of hard-working years. That filing cabinet held the complete history of the years in question. Unfortunately, so characteristically true to form in matters of this sort I rested on my achievement and fell back on the bad old days of the trunk, wherein more letters that were considered worth keeping found their easiest resting-place, and there throughout the latter years they began to pile up.

Kipling lay cheek by jowl with Bottomley; Wells with Chamberlain; George Lloyd with Lloyd George; Sam

Procession

Hughes with the Aga Khan; Marie Corelli with Ellen Terry; George Bernard Shaw with Michael Arlen; Noel Coward with Henry Irving; Lord Northcliffe with Rider Haggard; "Jackie" Fisher for once with "Charlie" Beresford; Townsend of Kut with Hubert Gough and Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne, the three outstanding unlucky victims of Fate in the Great War; the Countess of Warwick and Mrs. Brown Potter; William O'Brien and James Gordon Bennett; Lord Balfour and "Jack" Seeley, and so on and on, heaps and heaps and heaps of them.

Once more good resolutions have come to me and I am again engaged in the task of giving decent burial to my cherished letters. The difficulty is great, for the task, while absorbingly interesting, takes so much time. Instead of merely looking at the signature and at once consigning each letter to its proper alphabetical receptacle, my curiosity overcomes me and I must perforce read them all and refresh my memory with draughts from the spring of history.

I dip my hand into the lucky bag and bring forth letter after letter, and here are a few specimens as they emerge haphazard:

Here is a card from G.B.S. whom, as a Liveryman of my new City company I had asked to dine at the Mansion House. He said he would not come but reconsidered his decision.

" WHITEHALL COURT, S.W.,

" 16 September, 1932.

" No: hang it all, I can't become a City dinner *viveur* at 76. Let H.G. take my place: he is young and can



G.B.S. (vegetarian) eagerly watching R.D.B. (eating half a partridge) at a Court dinner of their City Company.

A Box of Old Letters

stand these orgies. I'll come on the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Company if I'm alive. If not, you can all drink my health, standing.

"G. BERNARD SHAW."

It was not possible to accept Mr. Shaw's suggestion to substitute Mr. Wells, for he, in his turn, also sent a brief refusal:

"CHILTERN COURT.

"DEAR R. D. B.,

"Alas! That evening is booked beyond redemption. But my heart will be with you.

"Yours ever,

"H. G."

When Sir Owen Seaman was so properly included in the Honours List after his long service to journalism as Editor of *Punch*, I sent him my congratulations to which he replied thus; also from Whitehall Court :

"DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I thank you, from a swelling heart,
For being glad that I'm a Bart.

"O. S."

The late Mr. J. M. Hogge, M.P., who used to take up a lot of Parliamentary time on any and all subjects, wrote me a letter in which he, a strong Radical, gave fulsome praise to Bonar Law for an unexpected act which gave pleasure to the Opposition. I sent it to Bonar Law who viewed it humorously in this way:

Procession

“PEMBROKE LODGE,
“EDWARDES SQUARE, KENSINGTON W.,
“20th January 1916.

“MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

“I am obliged by your letter and return Hogge's letter. Apparently, what is happening to me is that I am becoming more or less a *persona grata* to the Radicals at the cost of losing the support of my own friends!

“Yours sincerely,

“A. BONAR LAW.”

Sir William Orpen, one of the great masters of this era, painted a portrait during the War of a lady in France. Somehow or other the picture became known as “The Spy.” There was a good deal of speculation and controversy about it and Orpen, who ranked as a Major in the Army, got into difficulties with the authorities. I was involved in it by reason of the ensuing publicity, and for a while the painter and I were barely on speaking terms.

We patched it up over a cocktail in circumstances that much pleased Orpen, for on meeting him in Pall Mall I asked him to step in at my club and talk it over. The inner doors of this club had never been opened to a non-member, but I brazenly broke the rule, gave the Academician his cocktail—and was haled before the Committee for my misbehaviour! It was war-time, and so in due course everything was forgiven. I recall all this from the letter which follows:

A Box of Old Letters

" 8 SOUTH BOLTON GARDENS, S.W.

" MY VERY DEAR SIR,

" I am extremely sorry to learn that you have been laid up.

" I hope you are now quite well again. But take it from me—leave the 'Spy' alone and look after the 'POEM'; it's safer! With all good wishes,

" Yours ever,

" WILLIAM ORPEN.

" P.S.—Another 'Spy' would be almost worth while if she entailed another cocktail with you! at your club, and at your expense."

And here is one from the misty past of the time of the great Baccarat scandal—as far back as May, 1891. I wrote to Sir William Gordon Cumming, under instructions from my proprietor, asking him if I could be of service to him in case he cared to make a statement. The town was absorbed with rumours, and we did not then know that Sir William intended really to bring the suit which eventually ruined him.

" BIRDSALL HOUSE, YORK,

" May 27, 1891.

" DEAR SIR,

" I should prefer that no *interview* should be published in any of the papers until the termination of my case, which I hope will come on June 1st.

" Yours faithfully,

" W. GORDON CUMMING."

Procession

From Lord Derby on the War, in August 1917:

"The fourth year of the War which now begins sees a United British Empire determined more than ever to bring liberty to the World.

"DERBY."

On the same subject the Marquis Curzon of Kedleston wrote, "after three years of war the Victory has still to be won. There must be no wavering."

I asked Lord Robert Cecil, now Viscount Cecil, who was then Minister of Blockade, what he thought of it, and his reply which now reads curiously in view of his attitude on war, was:

"The path to freedom lies through the German lines."

People say that Mr. Winston Churchill acts always on his own initiative, so sure is he of his infallibility. I have reason to know better. He makes certain first and takes endless pains to find out for himself before making definite statements or undertaking great enterprises. Else why should he, as in this little note, depart from custom falsely attributed to him:

"CHARTWELL,

"WESTERHAM,

"21st October 1930.

"MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I wish you would advise me about this.

"Yours very sincerely,

"WINSTON S. CHURCHILL."

A Box of Old Letters

I quote briefly from Primo de Rivera, the first and most successful of Spanish dictators. He wrote in English "Spanisch," "Englisch" "gouvernement," but it was a good effort:

"I have always said and I continue to say, Ever since I have been Head of the Spanisch government that friendship with the Englisch people, its King and its government is the inevitable basis of Spanisch relations.

"PRIMO DE RIVERA.

"MADRID,

"10-4-28."

It is strange to think of Ellen Terry being diffident in finding words, but here she is saying:

"I am ill at expressing myself so I fall back on a quotation! 'I were but little happy if I could say how much.'"—ELLEN TERRY.

The aged, fox-hunting Field Marshal, Sir Evelyn Wood, twice a V.C., a remarkable old warrior, had an original mind. He hunted at least four days a week far beyond his eightieth year, and when he began to reminisce, his fascinating talk took you far into the night. If he had been permitted by Gladstone to crush Kruger when he had the old dopper in the hollow of his hand, there would have been no Jameson Raid and the South African War would not have been fought. Here is Sir Evelyn in a characteristic letter:

Procession

" MILLHURST, HARLOW,

" *November, 17-07.*

" MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

" I am greatly obliged to you for your prompt and kind congratulations on being appointed to the Colonelcy of the Blues. I hesitated for some little time as there are no emoluments attached to the Office, and the acceptance of the honour, which is great, involved the purchase of a new uniform, including those tin plates which on fine young men excite so much admiration in the minds of nursemaids. I nearly went into Hill Farm on Friday morning on the chance of being able to shake your wife's hand, but as usual I was a bit late.

" Yours sincerely,

" EVELYN WOOD."

I wish someone with the time and knowledge of the man would write the Life of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. He was a humourist as well as an actor; he was a man of the world; a stylist and a host whose equal did not exist in his time. His wit produced aphorisms and a multiplicity of clever sayings which should have been preserved. Among my many Tree letters there is this one from Glasgow while on tour:

" ALHAMBRA THEATRE, GLASGOW,

" *September 19th, 1912.*

" MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

" Here I am in bleak Glasgow, bent on the entirely unsympathetic but absolutely necessary quest of Mammon. To my shame, I am rejoicing in the accomplishment of my base enterprise.

A Box of Old Letters

"I cannot understand what you say about the photographic monopoly, but I am sending your postscript on to Dana, and am asking him to enquire into the matter. The world is full of chicanery. I hope we may soon meet, to pledge each other on independence of it.

"Yours sincerely,

"HERBERT B. TREE."

Was the Press Agent in existence in Government offices before the War? He was, only we did not know what to call him. Here, for instance, is a specimen of the work of what is now called the Public Relations Officer. Mr. Brodick, later Lord Midleton, appointed Colonel Sir Edward Ward to the post of Secretary at the War Office the better to deal with the Press. I reproduce a letter as far back as 1907, a perfect piece of Press agents' work:

"WAR OFFICE,

"22nd Feb. 1907.

"MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"In view of Mr. Haldane's speech on Army Estimates on Monday next, it might perhaps be of some help to you if you or some trusty one were to come to the War Office and hear from me the broad outline of the proposed announcement.

"Of course such information would not be available for publication until after the speech on Monday.

"Can you come or send at 12.30 to-morrow?

"Yours sincerely,

"E. W. D. WARD."

This was the Territorial development scheme so ably promulgated by Lord, then Mr. Haldane.

Procession

There was a war correspondent who was clever and outspoken but not always discreet. His name was Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. I had employed him for many years in various campaigns. He fell foul of the authorities at the Dardenelles and made no end of a fuss in his letters home. He went into Parliament, had the most astounding adventures at Budapest in the Bela Kun revolution, where he purloined a railway, rails, trains, stations and all; and finally died several years ago.

I select from the pile of letters one that was characteristically Ashmead-Bartlett. He was bitter with written invective, but his bite was only picturesque and in spite of his emphasis of expression he retained his friends. This letter has something to say about generals. I reproduce it merely to show how far peoples' feelings caused them to go in war time:

" CARLTON CLUB,
" PALL MALL, S.W. 1,
" Sept. 1, 1917.

" DEAR BLUMENFELD,

" These d—— optimistic generals, who live in French châteaux, who can save their pay, who are having the time of their lives, who are covered with variegated ribbons, who do not have 'to go over the top,' who are, with some few exceptions, men of the most indifferent intellect, who long to keep the War going as long as the Government will send them human fuel—so as to prolong their own feeble hour of imaginary glory—have succeeded in the last five months in killing, permanently

A Box of Old Letters

maiming and wounding 21,727 Officers and 344,614 N.C.Os. and Men.

"They have hardly moved the Hun an inch.

"Each of these 376,341 human beings has, or had, a soul, a family and his own particular interest in life. The entire population is in fact being handed over to Executioners in Red and Gold, who in normal times might earn after many years' service, £400 to £500 a year as Clerks to those whose destinies they now control.

"The world is full, and is fed up with, swaggering nonentities.

"Yours,

"E. ASHMEAD-BARTLETT."

In the good old Balfourian days there was a Chief Whip called Colonel Sir Alexander Acland-Hood, M.P. He was a Somerset squire, an ex-Guardsman, a tall, red-faced, choleric, hard-hunting, efficient political "boss" who ruled his M.P.s with a sure hand. Eventually, they made him Lord St. Audries, and in due course he slid off into the *Ewigkeit*. It was at the beginning of the War when our mutual friend Max Aitken, now Lord Beaverbrook, was in Flanders as "Eye-Witness" for the Canadians.

"ST. AUDRIES,

"BRIDGWATER,

"March 2.

"MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"What's the latest news of Max? I haven't heard from him for weeks—I suppose he is eye-witnessing in

Procession

France, but after all one could do that just as well from the Savoy judging from other eye-witnesses.

"It only wants a wild imagination and a slight knowledge of military terms—I see the *Times* to-day has a trenchant article on the indiscretions of Ministers' wives. They ought all to be kept at the Tower.

"Yours ever,

"ST. AUDRIES."

And now just a slight glimpse behind the newspaper scene; a note from Arnold Bennett with reference to a particularly vehement article:

"75 CADOGAN SQUARE, S.W. 1,
"5th May, 1924.

"MY DEAR BLUM,

"Many thanks for your compliments and the enclosures. What I wrote was diluted pap compared to what —— wanted me to write.

"Yours ever,

"ARNOLD BENNETT."

It does not seem possible that the Christmas annual of *Treasure Island* has been repeating itself for over a dozen years. Arthur Bouchier, who put it on the stage, wrote me the following in 1923:

A Box of Old Letters

"STRAND THEATRE,
"ALDWYCH, W.C. 2,
"17th January 1923.

"MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"Your letter is a great joy to me, because it shows that you are out of the wood. I am afraid you have had a rotten time. You are lucky to be out of London with these fogs coming up thick and fast every day. I don't mind two hours daily on the line from Brighton, in exchange for the privilege of getting out of them at night.

"Yes, *Treasure Island* has exceeded our wildest dreams of success, and we are refusing more money at each performance than we can take in, which is no exaggeration. Anyway, it looks as if it will be as hardy an annual as *Peter Pan*, which is a merciful thing, as it will be a pension in my old age.

"Hoping you will soon be among us again,

"ARTHUR BOURCHIER."

A little more mischief-making with the signature of four famous men, three of them since dead. The writing is by the pen of F.E., the late Lord Birkenhead, and it was despatched from Grosvenor House, then the private residence of the Duke of Westminster and headquarters of the Die Hard (House of Lords) movement.

Procession

"GROSVENOR HOUSE,
"July 29, 1911.

"SIR,

"We are being constantly asked whether the statement in the *Daily Mail*—that the Halsbury movement has collapsed is true.

"We beg to state in reply that it is as true as the Soap Libels, and less true than the story of the Pekin Massacre.

"We are, Sir, Yours, etc.,

"WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE.

"EDWARD CARSON.

"F. E. SMITH.

"GEORGE WYNDHAM."

I had occasion to write a note to Horatio Bottomley calling his attention to a statement in his paper which was not only libellous but in bad taste. Here is his reply:

"THE DICKER, SUSSEX.

"DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I'm so sorry. If I wrote a hundred pages I couldn't say more!

"Yours,—BOTTOMLEY."

When Colonel (now Brig.-Gen. Sir Henry) Page Croft, M.P., went to France in command of the Herts Territorials we all wished him great success. Presently they made him a brigadier and that was a grand thing, for up to then Territorials were not good enough to be generals; so I wrote him a congratulatory letter. He answered:

A Box of Old Letters

" 68TH INF. BRIGADE,

" Feb. 21st, 1916.

" MY DEAR NAPOLEON,

" Thanks very much for your kind congratulations. I am enjoying the new life and we have had some good straffes since I have been here and killed lots of Huns by good sniping and machine-gun work. One has now wider opportunities of destruction.

" I believe I am the first real Territorial to get a Brigade on active service and have, I think, to thank you some for preparing the public for such a shock.

" Yours ever,

" HENRY P. CROFT."

One of the principal motives for German "Schrecklichkeit" during the War was their hope of demoralising their enemies by means of bombs dropped from Zeppelins on towns like London. They did undoubtedly cause considerable apprehension in the poorer districts where people were huddled together and lived in vulnerable localities, but "by and large" the early Zeppelin visitations roused only resentment in some minds owing to their insensate and frivolous brutality. On the other hand, vast numbers of people went out of curiosity to seek vantage points from which to view the spectacle.

Sir Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, climbing a lamp-post in St. James's Park to have a good look! What a picture! We did not report details in those

Procession

strenuous times. The Censor would not permit us to do it, for we were like the ostrich with our head in the sand, so that the Germans should not know. All they had to do was to look at the American newspapers! They had no Censor in America, for they did not go to war until two years afterward. They told the story of how Mr. and Mrs. Coudert of New York took turns at the top of a lamp-post with Sir Austen, the dignified Cabinet Minister. Can you see him, monocle and all, perching up there while the bombs fell and the anti-aircraft guns at Hyde Park Corner sent up their screeching shells? I was not quite sure of the accuracy of the story in the New York papers, and so I asked Sir Austen to give me what they call in the American press "the low down." This is what he wrote:

"EGERTON PLACE, S.W.,

"October 6, 1915.

"DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I had already heard from an American friend of the account of the Air Raid by Coudert which you enclose in your letter. I am afraid I have to admit that as far as I am concerned it is substantially true, and that Coudert gracefully abandoned the position on the lamp-post to make room for me in order that I might the better see what was going on.

"I observe that he does not mention that Mrs. Coudert was lightly clad in night-gown and overcoat, having just gone to bed when the alarm sounded!

"Yours very truly,

"AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN."

A Box of Old Letters

So much for German "Schrecklichkeit." They have yet to take a proper and profitable course of study in psychology.

Lord Alfred Douglas was always a "bonny fechter" as becomes his Scottish ancestry. And, being a master of words, he has never been sparing in their use. I used to have many a tilt with this contentious gentleman, now like the rest of us, grown older and less impetuous. But in his "ginger" days Lord Alfred used to wield a terrific two-handled pen. Being, as I say, a master of words, a first-rate poet and prose writer, he probably felt himself justified in directing the following broadside at me:

" 16 DRAYCOTT PLACE, S.W. 3,

" Oct. 8, 1923.

" SIR,

" For Heaven's sake why do you mutilate the English language by writing in your foolish paper about "a wonder horse" or a "mystery ship"? If you mean a "wonderful horse" or a "mysterious ship" why not say so? Why go out of your way to make a b—— fool of yourself?—Your obedt. servt.,

" ALFRED DOUGLAS."

" To R. D. Blumenfeld, Esq., the mystery Editor of the wonder paper the *Daily Express*."

Rather strong meat, I admit, with the joke on me, but I have Lord Alfred's permission to print the letter here, though he is afraid "it is rather a rude letter."

Procession

The late Sir Edward Marshall Hall, K.C., did not like being mentioned in connection with large retainers, as witness this protest from him:

“ 3 TEMPLE GARDENS, E.C.,

“ Feb. 8.

“ MY DEAR BLUM,

“ Can't you keep your men off the fee question in their effusions about criminal trials. Any amount of harm was done by that statement—more than a week ago and repeated daily up to to-day—that I had received the biggest fee ever known in a murder case to defend the Chinaman. The jury, of course, heard of it and resented that enormous fees should be paid to Counsel to induce him to come down to Chester.

“ As a matter of fact, I received, *including* the special fee of 100 guineas which is compulsory, exactly the same fee that I should have received if the case had been tried in London, and the same refresher for the 2nd day. So far from being the largest fee, it was nearly the *smallest* in a case of that importance, and I had to return a larger fee in order to attend to it. These statements about enormous fees cause endless trouble with the I.R.

“ Yours,

“ MARSHALL.”

The War had not advanced far enough by September, 1914, to depopulate the football grounds. I thought it would be best to suggest a prohibition so that all able-bodied youths could be put to useful work or induced to

A Box of Old Letters

enlist. This was before we had compulsory service. The late Lord Long of Wraxall, then Sir Walter Long, wrote to me as follows:

“MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

“I have been thinking a great deal of your suggestions in regard to football, and I feel sure your admirable pictures of football spectators have done a lot of good. It occurs to me that it might be possible to produce two pictures opposite one another, namely, a snapshot taken of some football enthusiast on the field, whose name of course would not be mentioned, and parallel with it a photograph of some gallant fellow who has gone to the Front. A little of this rubbed in would, I think, tell. There is no doubt in many parts of the country the devotees of football devote a great deal too much time to it.

“Yours sincerely,

“WALTER H. LONG.”

The Rt. Hon. John Burns, whom I met again recently looking well and vigorous—now long past 70—suggested to me one day that it would be a happy thought to get up a football match between Poplar Poor Law boys and the young patricians of Eton. I passed it on to Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., and asked him to secure the support of Mr. Lyttelton, the Headmaster of Eton:

Procession

"ENGLEMERE,
"ASCOT, BERKS.,
"27th March 1912.

"DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"On receipt of your letter of the 20th instant I wrote to Mr. Lyttelton about John Burns' suggestion of a match with an eleven of Poplar Poor Law boys. I understand from him that he has heard nothing definite about it and that there would be many difficulties in the arrangement of such a match. This would be especially the case in the holidays.

"Yours very truly,

"ROBERTS."

Eton held aloof and the match never came off.

Here is a personal note. The *Daily Mirror* printed a picture purporting to be of myself. I wrote a chaffing letter to Lord Northcliffe commiserating with him on his bad taste in art. He took it seriously!

"THE DAILY MAIL.

"DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I do not know why the *Daily Mirror* inserted your photograph. When I saw it there this morning I thought that it was by your wish. I told Kenealy that as you had a particularly nice article about me in your Magazine, I thought it was rather a mean return, but he says that he knew nothing about it, and I have told him to go and see you.

A Box of Old Letters

"He certainly should have carried out your wishes in the matter.

"I do not agree with you, however, that the photograph is unpleasant. It strikes me as handsome and dignified.

"Yours sincerely,

"NORTHCLIFFE.

"*March 9th, 1911.*"

The late Earl of Halsbury led the Die Hard movement in the final vote of the Lords on the Veto Bill of 1811. He was very old but the most energetic of all the protagonists.

"MORTEHOE,

"NORTH DEVON,

"*August 14, 1911.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I feel that those who like myself refused to support a bill we had denounced in no measured terms, owe you a debt of gratitude not only for the great ability but also for the firmness with which in your columns at all events the campaign was conducted. I heartily thank you and I am sure those who acted with me will not forget it.

"Will you allow me to correct an error in the *Morning Post* of to-day in omitting the name of the Duke of Grafton as one who was prevented by illness from voting with us!

"Faithfully yours,

"HALSBURY."

Procession

Here is Oscar Hammerstein, the impresario who built opera houses by the score. He was completing the London Opera House, which is now Stoll's picture palace. This note explains itself:

"CARLTON HOTEL,
"PALL MALL, LONDON.

"MY DEAR BLUMENFELD,

"I simply feel wobbly; my head is still on my shoulders according to all reports, but I have rushes of blood to it, that threaten to become, to say the least, anti-septic.

"It's an herculean task I have undertaken all alone by my lone self and I am getting it good.

"Not a minute of rest I have had for the last two weeks; to-morrow morning I have to rush over to Paris and rush back to London on Monday.

"There is a horrible suspicion ever growing more suspicious within me, that in a moment of forgetfulness, I commit bigamy in its most aggravated form.

"When I get back, I call in to see you—sure; anxious to do it.—Melancholy Yours,

"OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN."

My old friend Gonnoské Komai, the Japanese poet, enlightens us as follows:

"HARCOURT TERRACE, S.W. 10,
"Feb. 7, '28.

"DEAR MR. BLUMENFELD,

"I am very proud to have your nice note quoting one of my little dreams from China and Japan. You say:

A Box of Old Letters

“ ‘ I always thought you did not kiss in Japan ! ’

“ In my verse I was, of course, speaking metaphorically and imaginarily. We *do* kiss in Nippon sometimes ; but not *in public* ! For we regard kissing sacred.

“ Yours as always,

“ GONNOSKÊ KOMAI.”

The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, who is now one of the world's greatest bankers, was Home Secretary on the outbreak of the War. It was his duty to control the police, and therefore the supervision of spies and would-be spies. Naturally, the air was full of rumours. Everyone who owned, say, a platform for washing cars, or a hard tennis court was suspected of harbouring treasonable intentions—preparing gun emplacements ! If you had a relation by marriage who was a German, you were, of course, a spy ! My German name, for instance, at first put me on the list for we were all stupidly doped with spy-mania.

I had my own doubts as to the efficacy of the police and the military intelligence department in the matter of spy-control, for I had for some years observed the activities of German spies, who went about unchecked in Great Britain and Ireland.

Therefore, I did not hesitate to criticise Mr. McKenna for not acting with greater energy and firmness. He deigned not to reply.

Then, one day, the spy-catchers did something that roused admiration and showed that they were alive to their work. I wrote to Mr. McKenna and referred to something that evidently pleased him. He replied as follows :

Procession

“HOME OFFICE,
“WHITEHALL, S.W. 1,
“30 Sep. '14.

“DEAR MR. BLUMENFELD,

“I write at once to say what pleasure your letter has given me.

“If at any time you happen to be in the neighbourhood of the Home Office I could tell you more on the subject of spies than I can well write.

“Yours sincerely,

“R. McKENNA.”

I called on Mr. McKenna at the Home Office. He said little but drew my attention to a great chart crossed and dotted.

“This shows,” he said, “what became of the spies about whom you were crying out. The very moment that war was declared they were all put under lock and key, all at one swoop, and the next morning the whole German spy system in the Kingdom was smashed to smithereens. They have never been able to recover.”

I said very little but I felt that Mr. McKenna was even a greater man than I had imagined him to be.

Finally, another War echo. Some day I hope the nation will do justice to the memory and the services of General Sir Hubert Gough, whose heroic Fifth Army offered a defence to overwhelming forces that will become historic. They sent General Gough to the Baltic as a sort of High Commissioner, but there was no plan worth mentioning and so nothing happened. He wrote to me when he came home:

A Box of Old Letters

" Sep. 4, 1919.

" DEAR BLUMENFELD,

" I came back from Helsingfors a week ago. . . . These Russians are pro-German. They are already plotting with them, they will show us *no* gratitude for what we have done for them or for the £100 million that we spent on them in less than a year, and they will throw us over to-morrow.

" The first step in restoring peace, prosperity and political liberty to Russia is to support the Baltic provinces and help them to form a Baltic Federation.

" Such a confederation will also form the best barrier against a militarist Germany and against Bolshevism.

" The German militarist danger is far greater than the danger of Bolshevism, which is already on its last legs as a political creed in Russia.

" Yours ever,

" H. P. GOUGH."

It is certainly true that the old Bolshevism has been diluted and even takes a back seat behind Hitlerism.

What interests me more, however, is not Gough's views on Bolshevism or the Baltic States, but his views on the rough treatment that has been accorded to him. Being a soldier he makes no public complaint. That is one of the reasons why I would not care to be a soldier. I hate being turned into a scapegoat. It is very dull and — unjust.



Index

- ABBEVILLE, 10
Abdullah, 115
Achill Island, 51
Adderley, Fr., 277
Admiralty, 19-21, 65, 67, 121-122
Africa, 40, 105, 144, 212; South, 32, 38, 40, 87
L'Aiglon, 77
Albemarle, Lord, 128
Aldershot, 122
Aldworth, 132
Alexandria, 64
All Soul's College (Oxford), 115, 117
Allen, J. L., 174
Allenby, General, 115
Altyre, 142
America, 15-16, 50, 71-72, 75-76, 92, 95, 103-9, 111-13, 119, 147, 158-59, 163, 175, 193, 201-3, 207, 209, 215, 229-30, 238, 245, 268, 310
American Civil War, 111-13
American Civil War (Henderson), 112
American War of Independence, 107
Amiens, 10
Anderton's Hotel, 227-28
Answers, 205
Antrim, 26; Castle, 26
Arabia, 115-16, 119
Argonne Forest, 203
Arnold, Edwin, 211
Arthur, King, 50
Ascot, 32
Ashmead-Bartlett, E., 304-5
Ashton-under-Lyne, 224
Attila, 164, 258
Audacious, 21
d'Aumale, Duc, 144
Austerlitz, 3; Battle of, 22
Australia, 212
Authors' Club, 185-86
Aylesbury, Marquis of, 127

BACCARAT CASE, 139-42
Bacon, Francis, 289-90
Bailey, 71
Baird, A., 127
Baldwin, S., 119-20, 268-69, 274
Balfour, Jabez, 258
Balfour, Lord, 19, 34, 81, 221, 268, 305
Balkan Wars, 165
Baltic, 318-19
Bancroft, Mrs, 211
Bantry, 50-52
Barnum, P. T., 69-73
Barrymore, Maurice, 211
Beaverbrook, Lord, 98, 100, 120-21, 219-20, 224-26, 235, 305-6
Becket (Tennyson), 131
Beckett, Joe, 129
Bela Kun Revolution, 304
Belgium, 181
Bennett, Arnold, 306
Bennett, J. G., ii., 139, 161-65, 202-3, 243-44, 246

Procession

- Bennett, R. B., 98
 Beresford, Lord C., 19, 23, 63, 68
 Berlin, Irving, 158
 Bernhardt, Maurice, 78-79
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 75-79
 Bertrand, Marshal, 206
 Besant, Sir W., 185-86
 Bible, 70
 Birkenhead, Lord, 149-55, 307-308
 Birmingham, 221, 224
 Bismarck, Prince, 100-1, 243-46
 Blackstone (William?), 52
 Blake, E., 211-12
 Bloemfontein, 32
 Bloomfield, 129
 Boer War, 38-40, 59, 87-89, 290-91, 301
 Bolshevism, 319
 Booth, Edwin, 77
 Boston, Mass., 167
 Boswell, James, 97
 Bottomley, Horatio, 153-54, 258, 308
 Boucher, 128
 Bougereau, 128
 Boulanger, General, 143-47
 Boulogne, 22
 Bourbons, 145
 Bouchier, Arthur, 306-7
 Brade, Sir Reginald, 10, 55-57
 Brentford, Lord, 271-75
 Bridgeport, 70
 Britain, America and, 103-4; War and, 9-11, 19-23, 31, 33-35, 56-61, 181-84
 British Empire, 34, 40-41, 83, 88, 98, 219-26
 Brussels, 145, 147
 Buchan, J., 121
 Buckingham Palace, 29
 Budapest, 304
 Buenos Aires, 76
 Buffalo Bill, 43-47, 178
 Bulgarian Atrocities, 16-17
 Buller, Sir R., 59
 Burke, Major, 44
 Burne-Jones, Sir Ed., 197
 Burns, John, 313-14
 Byng, Lord, 9-10
 CAFÉ ROYAL, 258
 Cagliostro, A., 258
 Cambon, Jules, 144
 Campbell-Bannerman, Sir H., 82, 87, 271
 Canada, 60, 72, 98, 128, 211-212, 224-25, 305
 Canopus, 21
 Cape Colony, 39
 Capel, "Dolly," 59
 Carlisle, 59
 Carlton Hotel, 149
 Carlyle, Thomas, 99, 133, 211
 Carnegie, A., 261-65
 Carnera, —, 129
 Caroline, Queen, 140
 Carpentier, G., 129
 Carr, Comyns, 217
 Carson, Lord, 25-27, 30, 153-154, 182, 308
 Casanova, 258
 Caux, Marquis de, 177
 Cecil, Lord Hugh, 82
 Cecil, Lord Robert, 300
 Cecils, the, 221
 Cervantes, M., 174
 Chamberlain, Sir A., 310-11
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 81-84, 88, 98, 219-26, 295
 Chamberlin, H. R., 88-89
 Chantilly, 126
 Chaplin, Viscount, 29
 Charlotte, Empress, 170-71

Index

- Charlton, 155
 Chelsea, 133, 211-14
 Cherwode, Sir P. W., 115
 Cheyennes, 43, 46
 Chile, 122
 China, 251-55, 316; Dowager
 Empress of, 30
 Christy and Moore, 127
 Churchill, Lord R., 245
 Churchill, W. S., 19, 23, 67-68,
 103, 121-22, 245, 271-73, 300
 Civil Service in U.S.A., 105
 Clandeboye Park, 26
 Clarke, Sir Edward, 140
 Cleary, Edwin, 46
 Clémenceau, G., 144, 147, 199-
 203
 Cleopatra, 77, 258
 Clermont, Ferrand, 144
 Cleveland, Grover, 103-5, 245
 Clonakilty, 51
 Coalition Government, 99
 Cobden, Richard, 220, 223
 Cobh ("Queenstown"), 50
 Cody, W. F. (*see* Buffalo Bill)
 Coleridge, Lord Chief Justice,
 140
 Collins, A., 258
 Collins, José, 93
 Collins, Lottie, 91-95
 Colorado, 47
Coming of the Fairies, 190
 Commons, House of, 50-51, 83,
 171
Condor, 63-64
 Connecticut, 70
 Conscription, 32-33
 Conservative Party, 268-69, 272
 (*see also* under Tories)
 Constans, 145
 Cooden Beach, 60
 Cook, Captain, 157
 Coolidge, President, 108-9
 Corelli, Marie, 283-87
 Corbett, Jim, 125, 128-29
 Cork, 51
 Cortez, Hernando, 168
 Coudert, 310-11
 Coventry, Lord, 141
 Cowdray, Lord, 210
 Craigavon, Lord, 182
 Craig-y-Nos, 178
 Crimean War, 45
 Crippen, Dr., 227-31
 Croft, Sir H. P., 308-9
 Cuban War, 112
 Cumming, Sir W. G., 139-42,
 299
 Cunliffe-Lister, Sir P., 274
 Curzon, Lord, 300

Daily Express, 83-84, 187-88,
 201, 225, 272, 311-12
Daily Mail, 37-38, 205, 290-91,
 308
Daily Mirror, 314
 Dakota, 104
 Daly, Augustin, 131, 211
 Daly's Theatre, 233; Daly's
 Theatre (New York), 131-32
Dame aux Camélias, 76
 Dardanelles, 23, 304
 David, 128
 Deadwood Coach, 44
 Deane, Mrs., 191-92
 Degas, Hilaire, 199; René, 199-
 203
 D.O.R.A., 274
 Delacroix, 128
 Dempsey, J., 37
 Denver, 47, 179-80
 Derby, Lord, 81, 300
 Devonshire, Duke of, 82
 Dew, Inspector, 231
 Diaz, Porfirio, 167-72
 Disraeli, B., 16, 150, 245

Procession

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, 173
 Doncaster, 139
 Douglas, Lord A., 311-12
 Doyle, Sir A. C., 185-92
 Dublin, 51, 53; University, 174
 Dufferin, Marquis of, 26
 Dumont, S., 292
 Dundee, 273
 Dunmow, 26, 135, 279-81
 Duran, C., 195

EDISON, T. A., 237-41, 261
 Edward VII, 44, 63, 126, 139-141, 285
 Elmwood, 207
Emden, 20
 Emma, Queen, 159
 Ems telegram, 8
Enchantress, 121
 Eton, 313-14
Evening Telegram, 105
 Expeditionary Force, 56

FABIAN SOCIETY, 277-78
 Falkland Islands, Battle of, 20
Family Herald, 284
Family Scene (Boucher), 128
 Fechter, 77
 Feisal, Emir, 115
 Fellowcraft Club, 103, 105
 Fisher, Lord, 19-23, 64-68
Ford of Kabul River, 31
Foresters, 131
 Forfarshire, 140
 Forrest, 77
 Four Courts (Dublin), 51
 Fourteen Points, 106
 France, 9-10, 56-58, 93-94, 143-47, 159, 181, 245-46
 Franco-Prussian War, 8, 45, 143
 Franklin, Benjamin, 106-7
 Frederic, H., 174
 Frederick the Great, 99-100

Free Food League, 82
 Free Traders, 82-83
 French Canadians, 40
 Freycinet, C. L., 144, 147
 Friedrichsruh, 244
Friend (Paper), 32
 Frohman, C., 258-59
 Fyfe, Hamilton, 207

GAIETY THEATRE, 95
 Gardiner, A. G., 275
 Garner, Miss, 141-42
Gedanken und Erinnerungen, 244
 Geddes, Sir E., 267-68
 Genghis Khan, 164
 George V of England, 19
 George, Lloyd, 8-11, 13, 99, 107, 201, 207-10, 258, 268, 273, 286, 295
 Germany, 9-11, 19-22, 33-35, 40-41, 99, 181-84, 209-10, 244-46, 286, 292, 294, 300, 309-11, 318-19
 Gettysburg, 111
 Ghandi, Mahatma, 119
 Gibbons, Grinling, 106
 Gilbert, Sir A., 137
 Gilbert, W. S., 216-17
 Gillig, Harry, 158
 Gladstone, W. E., 15-17, 25, 40, 133, 245, 278, 284, 301
 Glasgow, 98
 Goblet, —, 144
 Goebbels, Dr., 69
 Goethe, 99
Golden Butterfly, 185
 Gordon, General, 40, 253-54
 Goschen, Lord, 82
Gospel of Wealth, 263
 Gough, Sir Herbert, 9-10, 318-319
 Grafton, Duke of, 315
 Grand Canyon, 167

Index

Great Mogul, 164
 Greece, 93
 Greek Mythology, 46
 Grey, Sir Edward, 181-84
 Grey, Lady de, 139-40
 Grossmith, W., 258
 Gwyn, Nell, 258
 Gwynne, H. A., 32, 135

HAIG, EARL, 10-11
 Haldane, Lord, 33-34, 56, 99,
 303
 Hall, Sir E. M., 312
 Hals, Frans, 195
 Halsbury, Lord, 315
 Hamilton, Lord G., 221
 Hamilton, "Tody," 69-70
Hamlet, 77
 Hammerstein, O., 217, 316
 Hancock, Gen. W. S., 111-12
 Hanliu University, 253
 Harding, President, 107
 Hardy, Thomas, 211-14
 Haslemere, 131-34
 Hawaii, 157
 Healy, T. M., 25, 49-53, 245
 Hearn, L., 174
 Heenan, —, 125
 Helsingfors, 319
 Henderson, Colonel, 112
 Hercules, 46-47
 Heth, Joice, 70
 Hindenburg, President, 183
 His Majesty's Theatre, 59
 Hitler, A., 69, 168, 319
 Hogge, J. M., 297-98
 Hollingshead, —, 284
 Hollywood, 167
 Honolulu, 157-58
 Hoover, President, 107-8
 Hope Bros., 45
 Horne, Sir R., 267-69

Howard, Lord, 109
 Huerta, —, 171
 Hughes, Sir Sam., 60
 Hugo, Victor, 76, 214, 257
 Hull, 139
 Huntington Museum, 167-68
 Hurstmonceaux Castle, 59
 Hutt, Captain, 165

Idylls (Tennyson), 133
 Imber, Horace, 228
 Indian Creek, 45
Intransigent, 94
 Iowa, 45
 Ireland, 25-26, 49-53, 63-64,
 84, 182, 211-12, 317
 Irish in America, 15
 Irish Home Rule, 15, 25-26
 Irish Nationalist Party, 49
 Irving, H., 131-37, 211
Ivanhoe, 216-17

JACKSON, PETER, 128
 Jameson, Dr., 38
 Japan, 255, 316-17
 Jellicoe, Lord, 19, 21-22
 Jerry the Carman, 50-51
 Jersey, 147
 Jews, 78
 Johnson, Samuel, 97, 119, 193
Journal, 163
 Journalists, Institute of, 106
 Juarez, —, 169, 172, 201
Jude the Obscure, 212
 (Julius?) Cæsar, 11, 258
 "Jumbo," 71-72

KALAKANA, KING, 157-59
 Kansas, 45
 Keane, Charles, 136
 Kekewich, Colonel, 39-40
 Kenealy, 314-15
 Kennan, G., 261-62

Procession

Keppel, Admiral Sir H., 126, 128
 Khandahar, 35
 Khartoum, 40
 Kiel Canal, 19
 Kimberley, 39
King Edward VII, 65-66
 Kings, Divine Right of, 157
 Kingston, 97
 Kinsale, 51
 Kipling, R., 31-32, 174, 295
 Kitchener, Lord, 21, 55-61, 67,
 208, 246
 Knox, John, 120-21
 Komai, Gonnoské, 316-17
 Kruger, Paul, 87-89, 301

LAMBERT, DANIEL, 106
 Lancashire, 81
 Land League, 50
 Laurenzo, Marques, 87
 Laurier, Sir W., 211-12
 Law, A. B., 97-101
 Law, Bonar, 224, 273-74, 297-
 298
 Lawrence, Sir T., 168
 Lawrence, T. E., 115
 Lee, General FitzHugh, 111-12
 Lees of Virginia, 111
 Leighton, Sir F., 196
 Le Neve, Miss, 230-31
 Levett, Major B., 139
 Leyds, Dr., 87-88
 Liberals, 34, 82, 101
 Lichnowsky, Prince, 181-82
Life of Northcliffe (Fyfe), 207
 Li Hung Chang, 251-55
 Liliokalami, Queen, 158
 Lind, Jenny, 72
 Lister, Lord, 294
 Little Easton, 137, 279
 Little Red Riding Hood, 43
 Lloyd, G., 115, 295
 London, 10, 29-30, 37, 66-67, 77

Londonderry House, 29-30
 Londonderry, Lady, 29-30
 Long, Lord, 313
 Longford, 211
 Lonsdale, Lord, 128
 Lookout Mountain, 47
 Lords, House of, 31-32, 35,
 307, 315
 Los Angeles, 167
 Lossiemouth, 120
 Louvre, 128
 Lowther, Colonel Claude, 59-61
 Lucca, Pauline, 179
 Lyceum Theatre, 131
 Lyttleton, Dr., 313-14

MACALISTER, WARD, 30
 Macartney, Sir H., 251-52, 255
 MacDonald, Sir J. A., 278
 MacDonald, J. R., 120-21, 277
 Mackay, E., 285
 Macready, 77
 Madero, —, 171
Majestic, 128
 Manchester, 37, 271-72
 Manchu Dynasty, 252
 Manchukuo, 252
 Mansion House, 106-7
 Mapleson, —, 216
 Mapleson, Colonel, 178
 Marabout, Fort, 64
 Marconi, G., 237, 240
 Marlborough House, 30
 Marseilles, 87
 Marylebone, 63
 Masserene, Viscount, 26
Maud (Tennyson), 133
 Maxim, Hiram, 289-94; Hud-
 son, 293-94; guns, 89
 Maximilian, Emperor, 169-70
 Maybrick, Mrs., 211
 Mayer, M., 178
Mayor of Casterbridge, 212

Index

- McKenna, Reginald, 317-18
 Meighan, —, 98, 163-65, 174
 Meredith, G., 211
 Merton Abbey, 63
 Mesopotamia, 116
 Methuen, Lord, 128
 Mexico, 167-72
 Midleton, Lord, 303
 Miguel, 46
 Mill, J. S., 202
 Millet, J. F., 128
 Mitchell, C., 125-27
 Mitchell, Sergeant, 231
 Molière, 76
 Monte Carlo, 23
 Montezuma, 168
 Moore, F., 185
 Moore, M., 258
 Moore, Pony, 127
 Mordkin, —, 258-59
 Morland, George, 200
 Morley's Hotel, 87
Morning Post, 315
 Morpeth Mansions, 53
 Morse, S. F. B., 238, 261
 Morton, Charles, 94
 Morton, Richard, 92
 Mussolini, B., 168
- NAMOUNA, 165
 Nangkin, 253
 Napoleon, 11, 22, 69, 111, 145-147, 205-6, 208, 210, 246
 Napoleon III, 170-71, 177
 National Gallery (London), 128
 National Liberal Club, 33
 N.R.A., 104
 National Sporting Club, 128
 Nebraska, 45
 Nelson, Lord, 11, 21, 63, 258
 Nevill, Ralph, 59
 New Brunswick, 97
 New Caledonia, 94
 Newfoundland, 128
 New Mexico, 45
 New Orleans, 76, 199, 201, 203
 New York, 16, 37, 103, 105, 111, 131
New York Herald, 15, 70, 161, 165, 170, 173, 202-3, 247
 New York Yacht Club, 141, 162
 Niagara Falls, 70
 Nicholson, —, 21
 Nicolini, —, 177
 Nieuport, 57
Normandie, 163
 North, Lord, 111
 Northcliffe, Lord, 38, 58, 82, 205-10, 220, 227, 314-15
 Nova Scotia, 128
- OAKLEY, ANNIE, 44
 O'Connor, T. P., 53, 211-14; Bessie, 211
 Ohio, 107
 O'Kelly, James, 170-71
 Orange Free State, 32
 Orpen, Sir William, 298-99
 d'Orsay, Count, 59
 Oudin, Eugène, 216-17
 Oxford, 115, 117
 Oxford and Asquith, Lord, 99, 101, 121-23, 208
- PALACE THEATRE, 94, 216, 260
 Pankhurst, Emmeline, 13-14
 Paris, 9, 75, 94, 143, 199-203
 Parker, Sir G., 258, 278
 Parliament Act, 26-27
 Parnell, Charles Stewart, 49-50, 170, 211; his mother, 211, 245
 Pasadena, 167-68
 Patti, Adeline, 177-80
 Patti, Amelia, 177
 Patti, C., 177

Procession

- Paulus, 143
 Pavlova, Anne, 257-60
 Pearson, C. A., 219-24
 Pekin(g), 30
 Pekin Massacre, 308
Petit Parisien, 199
 Pevensey Bay, 59
Phédre (Racine), 76
 Phillimore, —, 51
 Phillips, Sir P., 56
 Phillips, W., 238-40
 Pigott, Mostyn, 258
Plain Tales from the Hills, 174
 Pony Express, 43
 Poole, —, 228
 Poplar Poor Law Boys, 313-14
 Porte St. Martin Theatre, 77
 Portland, 66
 Portsmouth, 19, 63, 122
 Portugal, 158-59
 Postlethwaite, Mrs., 284-85
 Prayer Book Reform, 274
 Pretoria, 87
 Princess Theatre, 136
 Pulitzer, Albert, 162
Punch, 297
 Pu Yi, 252
- Queen Mary*, 131
 Queen's Theatre, 137
 Queenstown, see under Cobh.
- RABELAIS, 59
 Racine, 76
 Ralph, Julian, 205-6
 Red Cloud, 44
 Redmond, John, 53, 211
 Rehan, Ada, 131, 211
 Renaissance Theatre, 75-78
 Reynolds, Sir J., 168
 Rhine, 21
 Rhodes, C. J., 8, 37-41
- Rice, —, 185
 Riddell, Lord, 122
 Rio de Janeiro, 76
 Ritchie, —, 221
 Rivera, Primo de, 301
 Roberts, Lord, 31-35, 63, 68, 87, 313-14
 Robertson, Norman Forbes, 59, 258
 Robin Hood, 43
 Rochefort, Henri, 93-95, 211
 Rocky Mountains, 47
 Roman Catholicism, 78
 Romano's, 127
 Rome, 27, 224
 Romney, 128
 Roosevelt, F. D., 104
 Roosevelt, Colonel Theodore, 104-6, 183-84
 Roques, Baroness de, 211
 Rossetti, D. G., 196-97
 Rostand, E., 77
 Russell, Lord, 140
 Russia, 21, 181, 183, 259, 262, 274, 280, 319
 Ryan, P., 125-26
- SACRAMENTO, 43
 St. Audries, Lord, 305-6
 Saint Joe, 43
 Salisbury, Lord, 245
 Salvini, 77
 Samuel, Sir A. M., 272
 Sandars, J., 81, 83-84
 Sandow, —, 46
 Sandwich Islands, 159
 San Francisco, 76, 158
 Sardou, V., 77
 Sargent, John, 30, 193-98, 211
 Savage Club, 249-50
 Sayers, —, 92, 125
 Schiller, 99
 Schnadhorst, —, 221

Index

- Schopenhauer, 99
 Scotland, 121
 Scott, Admiral Sir Percy, 22, 66
 Scott, Sir W., 99
 Scripps, —, 162
 Seaman, Sir O., 297
 Shakespeare, W., 77, 286
 Shaw, G. B., 277, 296-97
 Shaw, T. E., *see* Lawrence, T.E.
 Sheridan, General Philip, 111
 Sheridan, R. B., 59
 Sherman, Senator J., 111
 Sherman, General W. T., 111-13
 Sherwood Forest, 43
 Shoe Lane, 14
 Siberia, 262
 Siddons, Sarah, 284
 Sigel, Franz, 111-12
 Sioux, 44
 Skibbereen, 51
 Skibo Castle, 264
 Slavin, —, 127-128
 Smith, Gunboat, 129
 Socialists, 41, 277-78, 280
 Somme, 9
 Southdown Brigade, 60
 Spain, 93, 168, 301
Spectator, 213
 von Spee, Admiral, 20, 22
 Spiritualism, 187-92
 Spurgeon, C. H., 283-84
 Stanford, 202
 Starr, George, 72
 Stationers' Hall, 106
 Stead, Alfred, 56
 Stevens, —, 284
 Stevenson, R. L., 167, 173-76
 Stockton, F., 174
 Stoll Theatre, 316
Stonewall Jackson (Henderson),
 112
 Stracey, General, 141-42
 Strachey, St. Loe, 213
 Strakosch, M., 177-78
 Stribling, —, 129
 Stuart, Sir C., 208
 Sturdee, Admiral, 20, 22-23
 Sturgis, Julian, 217
 Sullivan, Sir Arthur, 215-17
 Sullivan, J. L., 37, 125-28
Sun (New York), 88
 Sun Yat Sen, 251
 Swinburne, A., 211
 Swindon, 235
 Swinton, Major-General Sir E.,
 57
 TADEMA, ALMA, 196
 Taft, President, 106
 Tai Ping Rebellion, 40, 251
Taming of the Shrew, 137
 Tannenberg, 183
 Tariffs, 82, 98, 103, 219-26, 272
 Taylor, H. A., 273
 Tempest, Marie, 258
 Tennyson, Lord, 131-34
 Territorials, 33-34, 303, 308-9
 Terry, Ellen, 135-38, 211, 258,
 285, 301
Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 212-13
 Texas, 45
 Thomas, J. H., 269
Times, 141, 306
 von Tirpitz, Admiral, 21-22
 Tivoli Music Hall, 93
 Tom Thumb, 72-73
 Tories, 82, 119
Tosca, 77
 Trafalgar, Battle of, 22
 Tranby Croft, 139-40
 Transvaal Republic, 38, 87
Treasure Island, 173, 306-7
 Tree, Sir H. Beerbohm, 59, 211,
 258-59, 302-3
Triumphant Democracy, 262
 Tunney, Eugene, 128

- Tupper, Sir C., 212
 Turkey, 115
 Turnbull, —, 37-39
 Twain, Mark, 247-50
- UGANDA, 38
 Ulster, 25-26, 182
 Unger, Frank, 158
 Unger, Gladys, 158
 Unionists, 82
- VAUGHAN, FATHER, 284
 Velasquez, —, 193, 195
 Venezuela, 104
 Venice, 66, 165
 Verdun, 203
 Viceregal Lodge (Dublin), 53
 Victoria, Queen, 16, 31, 71-73, 91, 141, 153, 173, 284
 Villeneuve, Admiral, 22
 Villers Bretonneaux, 9
 Virchow, Professor, 249
 Virginia, 111
- WALES, PRINCE OF, 106, 258
 War, Great, 8, 9-11, 13-14, 19-23, 30, 33-35, 56-61, 67, 98, 115-17, 171, 181-84, 201-3, 207-10, 224, 267-68, 280, 286-87, 300, 303-6, 308-11, 313, 317-19
 War Office, 10, 55-57, 112, 303
 Ward, Sir E., 303
 Warren, Sir C., 59
 Warwick, Countess of, 137
 Washington, 103, 107, 109-20
 Washington, G., 11, 70, 111
 Webster (C. L.) & Co., 248
 Wellington, Duke of, 73, 111
 Wells, H. G., 135, 137, 277-81, 295, 296-97
 Wertheimer, Ascher, 195-96
 Westminster Abbey, 97
 Westminster, Duke of, 307-8
 Westminster Hospital, 33
 Westminster Palace, 35; Hotel, 33
 Wetton, George, 227-28
 Wheeler, General Joe, 112
 Whistler, J. A. M., 193-98, 211
 White House, 107, 109
 White, Jimmy, 233-35
 White Star Line, 21
 Whitefriars Club, 277-78
 Wild, J., 129
 Wild West Show, 43
 William the Conqueror, 59
 William I of Hohenzollern, 245
 William II of Hohenzollern, 35, 40-41, 245-46
 Willoughby de Broke, Lord, 308
 Wilson Family (Hull), 139
 Wilson, Sir Fleetwood, 112
 Wilson, President, 106
Winter's Tale, 136
 Winterton, —, 115
 Wisconsin, 248
 Wise-Wood, —, 293
 Wolseley, Lord, 112
 Women, Votes for, 13-14; Charter of Freedom for, 13
 Wood, Sir Evelyn, 68, 112, 301-2
 Worcester, 113
 Wyndham, C., 258
 Wyndham, George, 81, 308
- YELLOW HAND, 43, 45, 47
 York, 63
 Ypres, Earl of, 39-40, 122
- ZEEBRUGGE, Attack on, 21
 Zeppelin, Count, 292
 Zeppelin raids, 309-11
 Zola, 246

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